NOVEMBER 8, 2004

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The most important reason to vote for John Kerry is one that he does not mention.

It is to safeguard democracy in America.

The Nation endorses Kerry for President.

(continued on page 3)

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LETTERS

R. O. BLECHMAN

RACE AGAINST THE MACHINE

Albany, NY

■ As a David Soares campaign volunteer, I was delighted to read Katrina vanden Heuvel's weblog and Katha Pollitt's comments about Soares's campaign for district attorney of Albany County ["Subject to Debate," Oct. 25]. I believe your readers would be pleased to know that the man who achieved the "stunning landslide victory" in the September primary is black. Soares's triumph was not only a major challenge to the Albany Democratic Party machine but an unprecedented challenge to a local power structure that marginalizes African-Americans. When elected, David will be the second black district attorney in New York State's history.

BARBARA SMITH

WE DIDN'T START THE FIRE...

San Francisco

■ I appreciate Major Butler's candor and on-the-ground assessment of the situation in Iraq ["Letters," Oct. 18]. But Major Butler, imagine for a moment that you're a firefighter whose company has been secretly taken over by a gang of arsonists. I respect and am humbled by your self-sacrifice in attempting to extinguish the fires they ignite. At some point, however, you must come to realize the root of the problem and respect the efforts of those of us who are trying to insure that the fires you fight on our behalf are not self-inflicted. ROGER C. BREWER

Castro Valley, Calif.

■ I honor Major Butler's service but am sorry he thinks he's fighting the good fight. The war in Iraq is more about controlling oil and the world than it is about terrorism. The people he is fighting in Najaf never posed a threat to Americans. I would like to ask the major what he would do had another country invaded the United States and was now occupying New York, Washington and Boston? Would he help the occupiers or fight them? Also, I did not ask him to fight for me or to avenge 9/11. I have never asked anyone to shed blood in my name, especially when that blood is of the innocent: Iraq and its people are innocent of 9/11. DAVID HOVGAARD

MISQUOTING A MISQUOTE

Little Rock, Ark.

■ It's come to my attention that something Eric Alterman recently quoted from my *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* column was in error ["The Liberal Media," Oct. 18]. I wrote this:

"On May 4, 1996, the *New York Times* published an article with a deceptive Associated Press byline stating that an FBI agent's trial testimony described a $50,000 windfall to Whitewater from an illegal loan. As the actual AP article stipulated, the agent gave no such testimony."

The *Times* byline was not, in fact, deceptive. Unknown to me, the AP produced two stories that day. One correctly stated that Kenneth Starr's prosecutors had rested "without showing how [Bill] Clinton benefited from a $300,000 loan as another witness had claimed." It quoted a prosecutor stating that the allegation was not important to his case against Jim McDougal.

The second AP article, by a different reporter, was all but identical to the version published in the *Times*. It erroneously stated that "jurors heard an FBI agent testify that nearly $50,000 from a $300,000 loan was used to cover Whitewater expenses." Writing in Harvard's *Nieman Reports*, Gilbert Cranberg had carefully parsed the agent's testimony to show that it said no such thing.

Characteristic of its Whitewater coverage, the *Times* used the inaccurate story, which became the template for many accusatory commentaries. In his own reporting, Cranberg interviewed the AP bureau chief, who did not advise him that there were competing AP versions. An advance copy of his article was submitted to *Times* editors, who repeatedly refused comment. The existence of a second, conflicting AP article thus remained unknown to him.

In the process of oversimplifying my own simplification of Cranberg's work, I drew a false conclusion about the byline. I regret the error.

GENE LYONS

The Nation, *too, regrets the error. —The Editors*

TAKE A ZOMBIE TO LUNCH

Seattle

■ What a laugh I had at Alexander Cockburn's tale of the "Zombies for Kerry" in Portland, Oregon ["Beat the Devil," Sept. 13]. Perhaps their "fixity of gaze" betrays not the presence of zombies but the presence of "the evil of two lessers," the only thing beyond the lesser of two evils—given that we don't have the parliamentary system needed for viable third and fourth parties and coalition-building. It isn't a zombie gaze but rather that "oh, shit" look of a deer caught fatally in the headlights. No way out, left or right—flattened. The folks Cockburn describes are not ready for the evil of two lessers. It's as if they are confronted with Nietzsche's abyss, which stares back if you gaze too long. Many have learned to stare back: Some were at the Battle of Seattle, which Cockburn holds up as "the serious rebellion," where the streets were filled mostly with progressives who, despite Clinton's failings, associate themselves with Democrats. Who else? Whether it's ABB or A BARF (Anyone But a Religious Freak), Northwest progressives are not inclined "to Ralph." GARRETT HERING

Brooklyn, NY

■ Here's a little insight from a shuffling "zombie": I'm pissed off at what's happening in this country, at a liar speaking in our name, at the unthinkable violence the current Administration is responsible for here and elsewhere. That doesn't mean I wasn't pissed off before this election. It doesn't mean I think Kerry is a gem. And it doesn't mean I'll stop fighting for labor rights or to get us out of Iraq once Kerry is elected. But it also pisses me off that Alexander Cockburn calls me an idiot for thinking that much is at stake in this election. Yes, this is about choosing the lesser of two evils. Underestimating the real differences in the candidates—despite their problematic similarities—is partly what enabled this disastrous Administration to take over. If there's some other choice on Election Day, Cockburn hasn't filled us in. AMY FREEMAN

THOSE PESKY WOGS GET RESTLESS...

Boston

■ Jonathan Schell's "Imperialism Without Empire" [Sept. 13] suggests that the rise of anti-American hatred has coincided with and perhaps resulted from the rise of US imperial ambitions. Rebellion against empire, be it Roman, Turkish, Arab, French, Japanese, British or Soviet, seems inevitable, with historical hindsight. The unique, ironic twist of the current rebellion is its grassroots, democratic nature; a riposte to imperial America's avowed championing of grassroots democracy worldwide. America is in some measure the victim of its own success, instilling a fever for freedom among peoples burdened with dictatorship, communism, poverty or exploitation.

One of the consequences of democracy and free will is that opinion does not always crystallize in predictable ways. And nothing more antagonizes the opinion of free people than the arrogant expression of imperial power. It is time for Americans to jettison hypocrisy and embrace our original democratic ideals with humility, lest we be forced to learn the bitter lesson the Romans suffered: that a democratic republic is incompatible with empire. GERALD V. DENIS

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND LUNACY

Southport, Conn.

■ As an addendum to my "Rudy Makes His Move" [Sept. 27], and to paraphrase Fighting Jack Valenti, "I sleep each night a little better, a little more confidently, because" our color-coded Department of Homeland Security was

(Continued on Page 34)

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IN THIS ISSUE

2 **LETTERS**

EDITORIALS & COMMENT

3 JOHN KERRY FOR PRESIDENT

34 IN FACT...

COLUMNS

6 DEADLINE POET
The President's Higher Authority...
Calvin Trillin

10 BEAT THE DEVIL
You Can't Blame Nader for This
Alexander Cockburn

12 SUBJECT TO DEBATE
Mary Cheney, Mary Cheney
Katha Pollitt

ARTICLES

13 A LONG FOUR YEARS IN MIDLAND
Bush's hometown is still behind him, but not with the enthusiasm of 2000.
Russell Cobb

15 UNDER THE VEIL, WHO'S FOR KERRY?
Many Arab-American voters loathe Bush, but they have little love for his rival.
Gary Younge

17 PLOTTING AN OHIO SURPRISE
David Moberg

18 STRAIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE
Not being "middle class," the poor have been invisible in this campaign.
Eyal Press

22 100 FACTS AND 1 OPINION
The case against the Bush Administration.
Milton Glaser (conception and design)
Judd Legum (text)

24 WHY I'M FOR KERRY
David Corn

26 WHY I'M (SLIGHTLY) FOR BUSH
Christopher Hitchens

28 ART MAKES A DIFFERENCE
The Bush era has seen an explosion of sharply political creativity.
Alisa Solomon

BOOKS & THE ARTS

35 GOODSTEIN: Out of Gas:The End of the Age of Oil
YEOMANS: Oil: Anatomy of an Industry
SHAH: Crude: The Story of Oil
ROBERTS: The End of Oil
HEINBERG: The Party's Over: Oil, War, and the Fate of Industrial Societies
Michael T. Klare

41 BODANSKY: The Secret History of the Iraq War
KEEGAN: The Iraq War
ANDERSON: The Fall of Baghdad
PARENTI: The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq
FELDMAN: What We Owe Iraq: War and the Ethics of Nation Building
Andrew Cockburn

46 MUSIC: Tom Waits • Björk
Jody Rosen

Cover by Gene Case & Stephen Kling/ Avenging Angels; photo by Getty Images; illustrations by Forkscrew Graphics, Brian Stauffer, R.O. Blechman, Lars Leetaru

EDITORIALS

John Kerry for President

The presidential campaign debates are over, and the time for decision has come. *The Nation* endorses Senator John Kerry to be the next President of the United States.

Any stocktaking must begin, of course, by comparing the records of Kerry and George W. Bush. Yet the upshot of such a detailed comparison, though entirely favoring Kerry, is not our principal reason for supporting him. To make clear why, despite strong disagreements with Kerry, we not only recommend a vote for him but do so with fervor, we must step back from the candidates and their positions and set forth an independent view of what we believe are the stakes in this election.

The most important is the consequence it will have in what has emerged as a crisis of American democracy. The crisis began on December 12, 2000, when Bush was chosen to be President by the Supreme Court. The gift of a true electoral mandate now to this previously unelected President would give fresh legitimacy and momentum to all his disastrous policies. And that new momentum could in turn place our constitutional system itself at risk.

This magazine's disagreements with Kerry are deep and touch on fundamental matters. We believed that the invasion of Iraq was "the wrong war, in the wrong place, at the wrong time" (as he now describes it) before the war was ever launched; he has come to that conclusion only recently, having voted to authorize the war. We believe the United States should withdraw from Iraq; he wants to "win" the war there. We think the military budget should be cut; he plans to increase it, adding 40,000 troops. (For what, exactly? to fight another wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time?) We reject pre-emptive war; he embraces it. We oppose the wall that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is building on Palestinian lands; he supports it. We believe in the elimination of all nuclear weapons; he wants only to stop their spread. He calls for significant expansion of healthcare; we call for a single-payer system that would cover everyone. He opposes gay marriage; we back it. If he wins the election, *The Nation* will pursue each of these differences vigorously.

But while we have sharp differences with Kerry, we believe he has the qualities required for the presidency. He is more than "anybody but Bush." His instincts are decent. He is a man of high intelligence, deep knowledge and great resolve. At times in his life—notably, when he opposed the Vietnam War—he has shown exemplary courage. He respects the law. He believes in cooperation with other countries and has the inclination and ability to bring America out of its current isolation and back into the family of nations. As a senator, he demonstrated concern for social welfare and has backed this up with enlightened policy proposals. He has supported civil rights and labor rights and opposed racism. He has supported the rights of women, including the right to an abortion. He has been an advocate of nuclear arms control and opposed the almost incomprehensibly provocative nuclear policies of the Bush Administration. He would rescind the most unfair of Bush's tax cuts for the wealthy. He would be a friend of the environment and return the United States to the negotiations on global warming.

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The Bush Record

As for Bush, where to begin the list of his mistakes, delusions, deceptions, follies, tragedies and crimes? Where to end it?

He failed to respond to repeated clear warnings of an Al Qaeda attack ("Bin Laden Determined to Strike in the U.S.," the CIA told him) and displayed startling incompetence when the attack came. Then he tried to cover up both failures by opposing the formation of the September 11 Commission, obstructing the committee's work once it was formed and denying key findings once they were disclosed. (To this day, Vice President Cheney asserts a link between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein.)

In the name of fighting terror, Bush waged a war in Iraq that had nothing to do with terrorism and was as unjustified when it was begun as, after the loss of thousands of Iraqi and American lives, it is unwinnable now. He has inaugurated an immoral and unsustainable policy of global hegemony based on military force, estranged most of the country's principal friends around the world and dismayed the world at large—which has begun, indirectly but pervasively, to resist US domination. He mocked the United Nations as "irrelevant" and defied the Security Council. Today our forces are overstretched in pursuit of delusional goals.

Bush's policies have turned away from the country's tradition of seeking disarmament exclusively by diplomatic means and adopted force as the mainstay of its nonproliferation efforts, violently pursuing weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, where there were none, and overlooking them in Pakistan and North Korea, where they existed. All the while, his Administration further provoked and disturbed the world by pursuing the development of new, "usable" varieties of nuclear weapons, to be employed for new purposes against new targets, mostly in the Third World. He has systematically cast aside or weakened environmental initiatives, domestic and international. He withdrew from negotiations to address global warming, which except for nuclear war is the gravest danger facing the world; sponsored a Clear Skies Act that fouled the air; gutted regulations limiting strip-mining; and sold off public lands to oil, gas, timber and mining companies; rejected fuel conservation measures; tried to suppress or repudiate the science on which knowledge of environmental hazards is based.

And while thus conspiring to discredit these and other scientific findings, he has pandered to a "base" of religious fanatics, many of whom are looking forward to a day of "rapture" when Jesus returns to earth and kills everyone but them. His attitude to the factual world in general is one of hostility and rejection. He has made fraud and fantasy foundations of his Administration. His own belief in something—that Iraq was a threat to the United States, for example—appears to be evidence enough for him that it is true. One of his advisers has mocked his critics by stating that they live in a "reality-based community," explaining, "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality."

Bush has by almost every measure worsened the US economy and set it on a path to likely disaster. He has taken hundreds of billions of dollars from the poor and people of ordinary income and given it to the rich through tax cuts (if you dare to point this out, you are accused of waging "class warfare") while driving the country into unprecedented federal debt and trade deficits, de-

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livering the nation's finances to the decisions of foreign creditors. He has increased our dependence on foreign energy sources. His approach to the economy and our resources is the same as to the environment—this putative believer in a "responsibility society" strip-mines the future to gratify the present.

Bush has broken his oath to uphold the laws of the United States. He asserted and made use of an array of "inherent" powers nowhere mentioned in the Constitution: to lock up and place in solitary confinement American citizens and others, with no access to courts or even legal representation; to withhold information from the public and Congressional committees; to detain hundreds of people outside domestic and international law in the legal no man's land of Guantánamo; and to permit the torture of prisoners.

He has governed through fear and intimidation. His party will not tolerate dissent either in its own ranks, from which it purges any moderate voice, or in the country at large, where his Administration insinuates that his opponents are in league with America's enemies. At his rallies, composed of carefully vetted supporters, people who oppose him have been thrown out and even arrested.

A Dangerous Mandate

A matchup of the records of the two candidates only begins to measure the stakes in this year's election. These come fully into view only in the larger context of a deeper crisis that has overtaken the American system of government. To begin with, the irregular procedure of the last election lends a special importance to this one. In 2000 candidate Bush, who lost the popular contest by half a million votes and was put into the presidency by a Supreme Court decision, failed to receive a popular mandate. However, he embarked on a radical, right-wing course anyway, compounding the insult to democracy. Yet it is so far only the *government* that has asserted global imperial ambition, waged aggressive war on false pretexts, condoned torture, strengthened corporate influence over politics, turned its back on the natural environment and spurned global public opinion. If Bush is now elected, then a *national majority*—a far weightier thing—will stand behind these things. The consequences would be profound. A crippled presidency would begin to walk on two legs. At home, public affirmation would turn the record of the first term, now having been inspected and approved by the people, into the starting point for an accelerated movement in the same general direction. Bush has already put through a new round of federal budget–wrecking corporate tax cuts, called for new repressive legislation in a Patriot II act and clearly announced his desire to "democratize" not just Iraq but the entire Middle East. Abroad, such a vote would deepen and confirm the United States' separation from the rest of the world, enclosing it in an eccentric and dangerous mini-climate of ignorance and lies.

On the other hand, if Bush is defeated, his entire presidency will acquire the aspect of an aberration, a mistake that has been corrected, and the American people will be able to say: We never accepted Bushism. We rejected the brutality, the propaganda, the misbegotten wars, the imperial arrogance. *And we never, ever chose George W. Bush to be President of the United States.*

What Is at Stake

But even these stakes are not the largest on the table in November. The largest and most important is the protection of American democracy. It is always difficult while enjoying the comforts and privileges of taken-for-granted liberties to imagine that they could be lost; but the elements of Bush's misrule have plainly converged to form this threat. It is the wars of aggression designed to expand imperial sway abroad that produce the fear that fuels his campaign. It is the transfer of money from the poor or average majority to the rich few and corporations that cultivates the allegiance of the corporate chieftains who swell Bush's campaign coffers while at the same time helping to bring the news media, now owned mostly by large companies, to heel. It is the media that amplify his Administration's war propaganda while failing to expose the deceptions put forward as justification for war and puffing up the bubble of illusion whose creation is perhaps the Administration's top priority. And it is government secrecy and Justice Department repression and a right-wing judiciary that chills the dissent that tries to puncture the bubble of illusion. The upshot is a concentration of power in the Republican Party that has no parallel in American history, including the Gilded Age and the Nixon era.

It is not only all three branches of government that have fallen largely into the same hands; it is the corporations, the military (which tends to vote Republican) and, increasingly, the communications industry, which are either propaganda arms of the party,

NATION NOTES

Turn to page 26 and you will see "Why I'm (Slightly) for Bush" by Christopher Hitchens. No, Christopher has not resumed his *Nation* column. But he has accepted our invitation to share his thinking on the election. Why turn over valuable real estate to someone who has spent too much of his time in recent months bashing and caricaturing the ideas of his former colleagues? Our theory (not shared by all on our masthead): Hitchens wrote his "Minority Report" column for twenty years and some of his former readers will be interested in what he has to say about his journey. Also, our idea was that the Hitchens case for Bush might go beyond the conventional one and challenge some of our own assumptions. You decide.

* * *

ON THE WEB: National affairs correspondent William Greider writes: "Fear and loathing are so intense in this campaign, one almost expects the 'blood-red moon' of the Apocalypse to rise over the Republic on election eve." Washington correspondent John Nichols says the Democrats' long-shot bid to retake the Senate is being helped by the woeful performance of GOP candidates. Case in point: During a visit to Paducah, home of the Quilters' Museum, Kentucky incumbent Jim Bunning requested more police protection because he said he feared an Al Qaeda attack.

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as in the case of Fox News and other outlets of the Rupert Murdoch media empire, or else simply bow to the pressure of Administration threats and popular anxiety.

Even before Bush's selection by Supreme Court fiat in 2000, a dangerous pattern had asserted itself at the top levels of American institutional life. The Republican Party embarked on a process of using legitimately won power to acquire more power illegitimately. In the impeachment proceedings against President Clinton for lying to a grand jury about sex, the Republican majority in Congress abused its power in the legislative branch to try to strike down the leader of the rival executive branch. The attempt failed. In the election of 2000, the party in effect abused the judicial power to seize the presidency for itself, and this time the attempt succeeded. The deed was in fact a culmination of a long, deliberate (if not conspiratorial) campaign of politicization of the judiciary, pushed by right-wing legislators as well as such groups as the Federalist Society. In a series of reapportionment battles, notably the one waged by House majority leader Tom DeLay in Texas, the party used legislative power to entrench itself in that same legislature. Meanwhile, a web of think tanks and other institutions, supposedly independent but actually de facto instruments of the Republican Party, was created. They cooperated in vetting political loyalists for government posts and in flooding the news media with apologists for the party and its policies. Under DeLay's leadership, the Congressional Republicans, leaving no stone unturned, have sought to take over even the lobbying establishment of Washington by threatening firms that hire former Democrats to work for them.

The persistent theme of these policies and actions, domestic and international, is to acquire power—to seize it, to increase it and to keep it for good. A systemic crisis—a threat to the Constitution of the United States—has taken shape. At the end of this road is an implied vision of a different system: a world run by the United States and a United States run permanently by the Republican Party, which is to say imperial rule abroad, one-party rule at home. Somewhere along that road lies a point of no return. It is in the nature of warnings in general that you cannot know whether the danger in question will come, or be averted by timely action, or perhaps never present itself at all. But it's also in the nature of warnings that one must act on them before it is too late, and this is especially true in the case of threats to democracy. That is why the danger to democracy takes primacy over other perils that are in themselves greater, including nuclear war and irreversible damage to the ecosphere through global warming. (It is notable that none of these three perils has been more than glancingly mentioned in the election debates that have just ended.)

No one can know when or how the decisive test of democracy might arrive. It could come quickly, perhaps in a crackdown following another terrorist attack on American soil, this time conceivably on a far greater scale than September 11, or it could come slowly, in a protraction of the process, already well under way, of gradual strangulation of independent institutions, amounting to a coup in slow-motion—a hardening of an informal monopoly of power into a formal monopoly—leaving the institutions of democracy technically intact but corrupted and hollowed out from within, helpless to resist a central authority that has drawn all real power into its own hands.

Although the precise steps by which a systemic breakdown might occur are obscure, most of the main elements of the danger seem to be contained in microcosm in one episode—the torture at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and elsewhere in the United States' nascent global gulag archipelago. The story begins with a secret memo from Alberto Gonzales, the White House counsel to the President and most frequently mentioned name for a Bush appointment to the Supreme Court, recommending that he issue a "finding" that neither international law, in the form of the Geneva Conventions, nor US law, in the shape of the War Crimes Act (18 US Code, Section 2441) was applicable to abuses of prisoners in Afghanistan. The "war on terror," he said, was a "new paradigm," rendering provisions of the Geneva Conventions "quaint." As for US law, a presidential determination would help tormentors brought to justice by creating "a reasonable basis in law that Section 2441 does not apply, which would provide a solid defense to any future prosecution." Even before the crimes were committed, the White House was planning how to beat the rap. In one short memo, a new vision of law came into view. In this vision, the executive was freed from legal accountability as well as Congressional oversight, while at the same time the individual person was stripped of his fundamental human rights. It was law—if "law" is the right word for it at all—cut to imperial specifications.

CALVIN TRILLIN

A President Who Listens To a Higher Authority

He can't remember one mistake.
He'll stay on course till Hades freezes.
How can he be so certain still?
Because he's got the word from Jesus.

In meetings of his White House staff,
Unquestioning commitment pleases,
Since human doubts mean nothing to
A man who's got the word from Jesus.

He treats his critics in the press
As if they're yapping Pekingeses.
Reporters deal in mundane facts;
This man has got the word from Jesus.

He can't believe that you'd support
The sort of man who eats French cheeses,
When you can vote to keep in place
A man who's got the word from Jesus.

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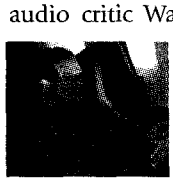

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A blizzard of other memos justifying the abuse of prisoners followed from lawyers at the Pentagon and the Justice Department, and soon Defense Secretary Rumsfeld had authorized several new varieties of torment for the prisoners at Guantánamo. Not long after that, the superintendent of Guantánamo, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, traveled to Iraq to teach the command there the new interrogation arts. To the surprise of the Administration, the war was not going well, and the military command was hungry for intelligence from the prisoners at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere. A memo had gone out from a captain in intelligence stating, "The gloves are coming off gentlemen regarding these detainees. Col. Boltz has made it clear that we want these individuals broken."

They were. In the recently published report "AR 15-6 Investigation of the Abu Ghraib Detention Facility and 205th Military Intelligence Brigade" by Maj. Gen. George Fay, cited in *The New York Review of Books* by Mark Danner, we read:

> In October 2003, DETAINEE-07, reported alleged multiple incidents of physical abuse while in Abu Ghraib. DETAINEE-07 was an MI hold and considered of potentially high value. He was interrogated on 8, 21 and 29 October; 4 and 23 November and 5 December. DETAINEE-07's claims of physical abuse (hitting) started on his first day of arrival. He was left naked in his cell for extended periods, cuffed in his cell in stressful positions ("High cuffed"), left with a bag over his head for extended periods, and denied bedding or blankets. DETAINEE-07 described being made to "bark like a dog, being forced to crawl on his stomach while MPs spit and urinated on him, and being struck causing unconsciousness."

The overthrow of law by legal-sounding phrases penned in secret; the laws of the Republic falling before the demands of empire; nullification of any check or balance on the President; suspension of fundamental human rights; a tangle of contradictory bureaucratic memos; blind imperial ambition leading to catastrophic war; mayhem and failure in that war unfolding behind a shimmering screen of high-sounding phrases extolling the spread of democracy; panicked resort to criminal emergency measures; torture and other outrages against human dignity hidden behind a battery of euphemisms ("sleep adjustment," "setting the conditions" for interrogation); the pre-organized rejection of any accountability, including that imposed by the articles of the US criminal code: Are these not the main features we might expect to see writ large if a full-scale collapse of the Constitution of the United States were to come?

Safeguarding Democracy

And that brings us back to the election and our endorsement of John Kerry. The most important reason to vote for John Kerry in November is to safeguard democracy in America.

Kerry's election would not necessarily save, and Bush's election would not necessarily destroy, democratic government in the United States. Even as President, even "in power," Kerry might well find himself "in opposition." In that case, he would need all the help from ordinary people he could get, and there's good reason to believe it would be forthcoming. The impeachment of Clinton failed, but it demonstrated the strength of the assault on legitimate government that can be waged not by the presidency but upon the presidency—and that was in peacetime. Clinton, after all, began his two terms in office with all three branches of government in Democratic hands but ended with all three in Republican hands. (His presidency was perhaps the most brilliant political retreat in American history, but it *was* a retreat.) Moreover, Kerry has given his right-wing opponents powerful ammunition. By pledging to win a war in Iraq that is unwinnable, he may have put his foot in a trap that would snap shut once he was in office, leaving him open to the charge of failure. What would the party that impeached Clinton for sex and lies do to a President who presided over the "loss" of Iraq in the midst of the "war on terror"?

If Bush is elected, the role of popular activism in support of the democratic system would be even more important. Roughly half the country dissents from Bushism. The antiwar movement, and now the campaign itself, have generated widespread and intense opposition. Activism has blossomed. New progressive organizations have been founded and will outlast the election. Events are also unlikely to favor the Administration. Already, its war policy and its fiscal policies are widely recognized as disasters. Opposition is bound to be strong and can save the Republic. And let us recall that when President Nixon threatened the constitutional system thirty years ago, he was driven from office in disgrace by popular fury. For all its importance, the election is only one episode in a longer popular struggle, whether Bush or Kerry is President. Either way, *The Nation* will devote itself to the fight.

Yet it remains true that of all the things Americans can now do to support democracy, the election of John Kerry is the most important. A Kerry presidency would seriously disrupt the concentration of power at the heart of the present danger. He might still try to "win" the Iraq war but would be less likely to wage future wars. His appointments to the Supreme Court would stop the Court's slide into unchecked, one-sided partisanship. His control of the bully pulpit would be a powerful counterforce to the right-wing propaganda that now all but drowns out other voices in the news media. His control of the agencies of the executive branch would halt, or at least retard, their merger with corporate America. More important, the simple structural fact that the Democrats are the other party would create a counterbalance to the right-wing power that predominates elsewhere in the system. The Democrats, including Kerry, have been disappointing champions of their namesake, democracy, yet the culture of their party is still an improvement over that of the Republicans. The Democrats are reluctant imperialists; the Republicans are imperialists by avocation. The Democratic Party generally wants to defend civil liberties and does so when it dares; the Republicans, with honorable exceptions, apparently would sweep them aside. The Democrats prefer social justice, however weakly they fight for it; the Republicans would give every dollar they can find to the rich. The Democrats are inclined to limit corporate power; the Republicans *are* corporate power.

What can be lost, slowly or abruptly, as the crisis unfolds, is everything that was lost by Detainee 07. What can be saved—let us rescue the beautiful word from the cesspool through which the Bush Administration has dragged it—is freedom.

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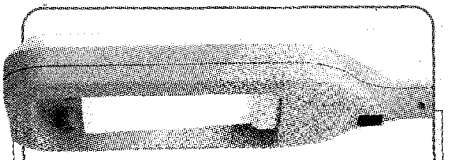

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

You Can't Blame Nader for This

Let's hedge this with all the usual qualifiers. Kerry could pull it out. The spread's within the margin of error. Respondents to polls are lying out of fear of John Ashcroft. Pollsters aren't reaching Kerrycrats with cell phones. But whatever way you cut it, after three debates in which polls assessed him as the victor, most polls say Kerry is lagging. As of now (October 20), the spread mostly ranges from an eight-point Bush lead to a dead heat. Worse, from Kerry's point of view, some postdebate numbers show him dropping among low-income workers and urban voters, once the lifeblood of the Democratic Party. Margins in crucial states like Ohio, Pennsylvania and Florida are razor-thin.

Why? Has a candidate or a party ever been more pleasantly caressed by the winds of history in an election year than John Kerry and the Democrats? A majority of Americans don't think Bush has done a particularly good job, and they've thought this for months, though more of them like Bush than like Kerry.

On Bush's watch the economy has performed poorly, and people are scared it will soon get worse. Headlines have blared the news: Real wages have fallen across the past year. Many people who lost jobs in the recession aren't getting them back. Under Bush the percentage of people with jobs has fallen by 2 percent, which translates into 4.5 million people. Middle-class income is falling. More are in poverty than ever before. The budget deficit is more than 40 percent of federal revenues, excluding funds ultimately committed to Social Security and Medicare.

Bush and his closest associates have been directly identified in almost all major mass media as perpetrators of one of the most colossal deceits in the history of propaganda, the concoction of Saddam's nonexistent WMDs as the pretext for attacking Iraq last year. Could any candidate have hoped for an October thunderclap as sonorous as that sounded by Charles Duelfer of the government's own Iraq Survey Group, that when the United States launched its attack Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction and had long since abandoned programs to produce them?

The war on Iraq itself is unpopular. It has carried other well-publicized scandals in its slipstream: the Plame investigation into the White House's outing of the identity of a CIA officer; the devastation to America's international stature wrought by the tortures ordered and perpetrated by Americans in Abu Ghraib and elsewhere; the Israeli spy scandal. In mid-month yet another October surprise was gifted to Kerry: a mutiny by US troops in Iraq, publicly accusing the Army of ordering them to risk death without adequate equipment.

So history has dealt Kerry all the high cards, save the one that bears his own face (against the scenic background of a billionaire wife and six houses). This card still lies on Bush's side of the table.

Only two men in US history have gone directly from the Senate to the White House, Warren Harding in 1920 and John F. Kennedy in the squeaker of 1960. This year the Democrats put two senators on the ticket, thereby burdening it with the deficits of incumbency endured by Bush. Few weapons in Bush's sparse armory in the debates were as effective as his riposte to Kerry's innumerable, pledge-laden plans for healthcare: "He's been in the United States Senate twenty years. Show me one accomplishment toward Medicare that he accomplished."

The evasions, compromises and contradictions in Kerry's political biography are there in the record to tally, and the Bush campaign has done so, to deadly effect. Kerry is a flip-flopper, and his votes show it. His leaps back and forth over the fence on the issue of the war across the past months have only compounded this career record. With the splendid gift of the fake WMDs placed before him, he has been incapable of unwrapping it. Worse, in early August he proclaimed that most likely he too, even if he had known the WMD threat to be bogus, would have authorized an attack on Iraq.

With the Bush Administration's overall record, particularly on the economic front, as poor as it is, one might have reckoned with near certainty that a hefty exchange of seats in the House, and even a handful in the Senate, would see a turnover of control from Republicans, with consequent splitting of power and a renaissance of vital important checks on the perils of a Bush second term.

But the Democrats have continued the disastrous displacement, familiar in Clinton-time, of resources away from winning back the Congress. To recapture the House the Democrats need to win twelve Republican-held districts. Overall, only sixteen Republican districts are in serious contention. Of these, two are rated as slimly tilting toward the Democrats, fourteen are tossups. In other words, recapture is a long shot. The Democrats have a slightly better chance in the Senate.

We are now witnessing the Democratic Party in very advanced decay. After the Clinton/DLC years, its street cred is conclusively shot. In formal political function the party is nothing much more than an ATM machine, spewing out torrents of cash, supplied by the unions and by corporations seeking favors, to the armies of consultants and operators who have lived off it for decades. Its right wing comprises people who could as easily be in the Republican Party, its center people incapable of standing on any principle. Its left, this season, is made up of the Anybody But Bush crowd, who last spring made the decision to let Kerry be Kerry, without a word of criticism, when he pledged a better war on Iraq and even a march on Tehran.

And if, against most current indications, Kerry wins? He has proffered almost nothing to look forward to, aside from a pledge, which can easily be aborted by a "crisis," to leave Social Security alone. With the Congress against him, he'll be mostly hogtied domestically. On the foreign front he's eagerly hogtied himself. No more compliant serf to the imperatives of Empire and to the government of Israel than Kerry has been visible this season.

A November 3 movement, to pressure Kerry if he wins, rebuild if he loses? Many on the left have argued that. But how will they know which way to march, when they started this year with all the wrong maps? ■

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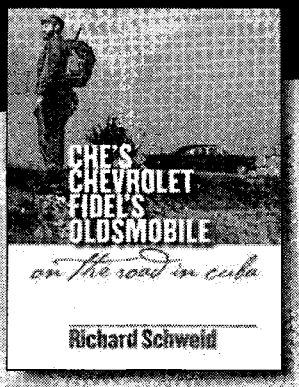

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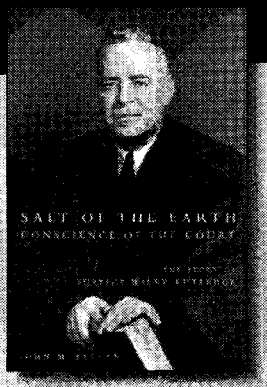

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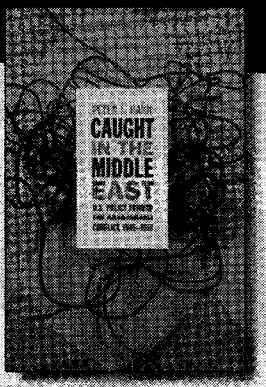

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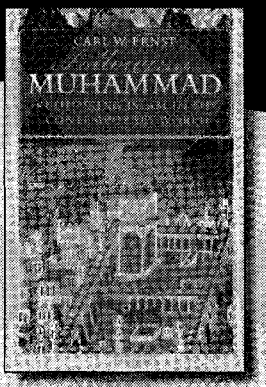

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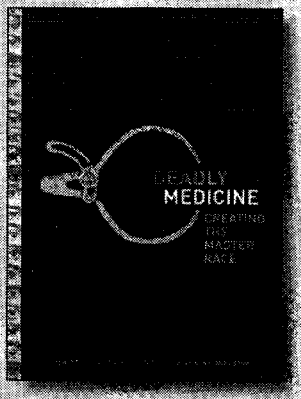

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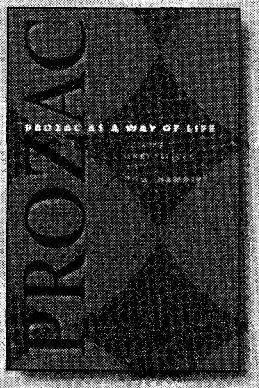

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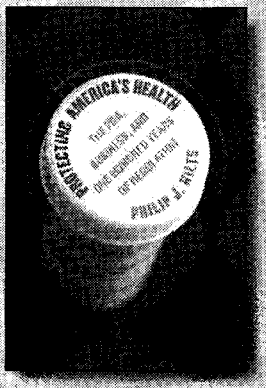

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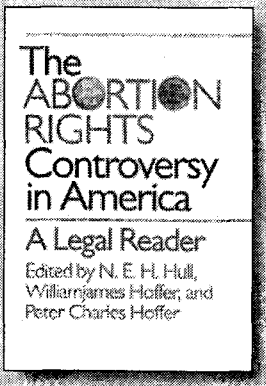
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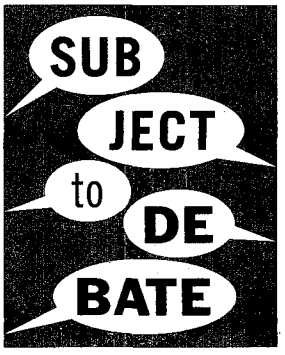
KATHA POLLITT

Mary Cheney, Mary Cheney



Reservists mutiny in Iraq, old people keel over standing in line for flu shots and all sorts of cats leap out of Bush's bag of secrets: According to Ron Suskind's revelatory *New York Times Magazine* cover story, the President himself recently told a closed Republican meeting that if elected he would "move quickly" to privatize Social Security, lavish funds on faith-based initiatives and more. The debates, which were supposed to seal Kerry's doom as a garrulous dandy, actually showed that he'd make a pretty good President: confident, serious, knowledgeable, affable. Who cares about his windsurfing now? The President's performance—sluggish and sullen in the first debate, prickly and evasive in the second and third—was so disgraceful that even on the *National Review* website there was wailing and gnashing of teeth. He couldn't recall a single mistake he'd made in four years? Most people would have no problem thinking of a mistake they'd made that week.

Thank God for Mary Cheney. Without her, right-wing pundits would be stuck with David Brooks's truly embarrassing "Bush is heart, Kerry is head" line—vote for Bush, he cares less about the facts! Defending the honor of Mary Cheney has to be more fun than that: How dare John Kerry, that cad, that lowlife, that poltroon, mention on national TV that the Vice President's older daughter is a… lesbian? Writes Brooks, "He will say or do anything to further his career." Was Kerry's remark "spontaneous—and unpleasant" (Robert Novak) or "McCarthyite" and evidence of Kerry's "cheap, cold, calculating cynicism" (William Kristol)? As I write, the phony scandal is in full swing: Pundits preen, shock jocks rant, closet Republican Ed Koch waxed so wroth he practically gave himself a heart attack on New York 1. We're back in the world of soaps and scandal and sex: Maybe Zell Miller will challenge Kerry to a duel!

In the media spin world, it doesn't matter that Dick Cheney has spoken publicly about his gay daughter or that she attended the Republican convention with her girlfriend and was even shown on TV. It doesn't matter that Mary Cheney, currently managing her father's campaign office, has not only been out of the closet for a decade, she's a kind of professional gay conservative—faced with a national boycott during the 1990s due to its antigay policies, Coors hired her to spruce up its image among gay beer-drinkers. No one is asking why this grown-up woman is not speaking for herself: to reinforce the damsel-in-distress motif? to keep from screaming at her parents? (Mom! Dad! Stop looking so mournful!) All that matters is the instaquiz: Was Kerry "offensive"? Two- thirds of those polled say yes. Probably they'd be offended if he said Sappho herself was a lesbian, because being a lesbian is shameful and perverted and just…not…something you talk about.

Thus are positions reversed: Kerry, the gay-friendly candidate, becomes the victimizer of innocent daughters, and Bush, who supports a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage and who relies on homophobia to excite his fundamentalist base, becomes the generous protector. But if there's nothing immoral about being gay, and if Mary Cheney has herself made her sexual orientation public, what did Kerry do that was so monstrous?

Here's what I find offensive: Kristol and William Safire comparing Kerry to Joseph McCarthy. Republicans, Safire writes, "have in mind a TV spot using an old film clip of a Boston lawyer named Welch at a Congressional hearing, saying 'Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?'" Who knew Safire, that old Nixonian, held McCarthy in such low esteem! Let's see: McCarthy destroyed lives with dubious accusations of secret Communist affiliations, something he regarded as evil. Kerry mentioned Mary Cheney's sexual orientation, which is a fact, is not a secret and is not a bad thing in Kerry's eyes. The analogy only makes sense if Kristol and Safire think homosexuality is as bad as communism—or communism is not as bad as they thought.

The Mary Cheney gaffe is a bit like Paul Wellstone's memorial service, or for that matter the "Dean scream"—a blip, a nothing, a wisp that the Republican wind machine wants to whip into a tornado of hysterical outrage. And because so much of the media are frivolous and lazy, it can. The tactic doesn't work for long—don't you feel silly now, Minnesotans, for voting Republican because of a eulogy? and does anyone today think Howard Dean is crazy?—but it doesn't need to. It only needs to push the right buttons—propriety, prurience, politeness—for a few crucial days.

Every minute people are focusing on what John Kerry said about Mary Cheney is a minute they're not talking about Iraq, or Guantánamo, that swamp of injustice and torture, or the plain basic fact that Bush, who lost the popular vote, has used his four years in the White House to turn the country over to lobbyists, ideologues and charlatans. It's a minute they're looking at Kerry's character and not at Bush's. It means they're not demanding action on the mushrooming scandal of pro-Bush vote suppression and fraud, and not just in Florida either—the intimidation of black voters, the trashing of Democratic registration forms by GOP-contracted firms and their rejection by state authorities on flimsy pretexts, those paperless electronic voting machines. (Penny Venetis and Frank Askin of the Rutgers Constitutional Litigation Clinic just filed a magnificent brief challenging the use of such machines in New Jersey.)

Finally, as Richard Kim points out on www.thenation.com, defending Mary Cheney lets Republicans look concerned for a gay person while preserving their basic homophobic agenda. If they cared so much about gay women, they would rebuke Oklahoma senate candidate Tom Coburn for nuttily claiming that lesbianism is so rampant at some local schools that girls are only permitted to go to the bathroom one at a time. They would reject support from fundamentalist ministers who talk about "biblical" punishment for gays. Bush himself would scorn to win the White House if it meant defacing the Constitution with prejudice.

But then, as Brooks might put it, this is a man who will say or do anything to further his career. ■

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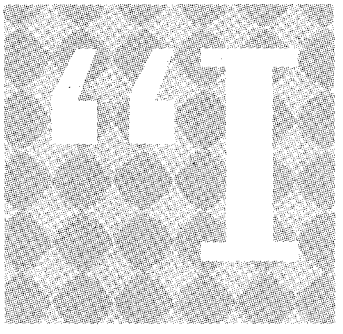
ARTICLES

A LONG FOUR YEARS IN MIDLAND



"I don't know what percentage of me is Midland," George W. Bush said four years ago, "but I would say people, if they want to understand me, need to understand Midland and the attitude of Midland." In Bush's rhetoric, the West Texas town is populated by people just like him—hard-workin', straight-shootin' entrepreneurs tempered by the Protestant work ethic and evangelical Christianity. We know what Midland symbolizes in Bush-speak, but how is the town faring four years later?

by RUSSELL COBB

At first glance, Bush seems as popular as ever in the "Tall City"—an allusion to the cluster of downtown skyscrapers rising off the featureless Texas plains. Signs on I-20 welcome visitors to the "Hometown of George and Laura Bush: Where the Sky's the Limit." The tourist office at the Chamber of Commerce proudly displays Bush paraphernalia behind glass cases, as if the hats and T-shirts proclaiming "Midland Is Bush Country" and "Bush/Cheney '04" were precious artifacts, not campaign propaganda.

Yet down the quiet cul-de-sacs as wide as landing strips, there is a rumble of discontent. "I've seen the very character of the Republican Party change in Texas," a retired schoolteacher named Marianne told me. Marianne is, in many ways, a typical white-collar Midlander: a lifelong Republican and member of the country club, she refers to domestic workers as "the help." Although she won't denounce Bush publicly ("It would be social suicide, honey," she says about her refusal to divulge her last name), she decries the Tom DeLay–led takeover of the GOP. "Texas Republicans used to be upstanding people. You could count on their word. Not anymore."

The fracture between "country club" Republicans like Marianne and the religious right goes back decades here, and George W. Bush used to represent the compromise between the two factions. But four years into a Bush presidency, Marianne now questions some basic assumptions about Bush's "compassionate conservative" doctrine. "I support our troops, but the people dying in the war are the blue-collar people around West Texas who worked in the oilfields, not the white-collar people of Midland. The war's been a mess from the beginning."

While Bush received around 75 percent of the Midland County vote in 2000, public enthusiasm for his 2004 campaign is not readily apparent this time around. On a recent visit in September, the only Bush yard signs or bumper stickers I saw were those kept safely locked away behind glass cases at the Chamber of Commerce. Midlanders, perhaps like Americans everywhere, are much more likely to identify themselves as "nonpolitical" than avid Bush supporters.

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Unease with Midland's hometown boy has even been expressed by some oil industry players—the very people who should be his biggest supporters. David Rosen, a native New Yorker and former petroleum geologist who came to Midland during the 1970s boom years, remembered Bush as a "likable guy who always remembered your name." When he first arrived in Texas, Rosen considered himself "apolitical," but he is now one of Midland's most visible Democrats and director of John Kerry's Midland County campaign. "I'm known as someone who's not afraid to be anti-Bush in Midland," he says. He senses a sea change in Midland's attitude toward Bush since the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. "People have been telling me at the supermarket, 'Wait a minute, this isn't what America stands for.'" Rosen believes the war will lead to decreased support for Bush in Midland in November.

War concerns aside, Midlanders of all stripes are worried about the inexorable decline of the region's petroleum industry—the main source of income and jobs in the Permian Basin. Ever since the 1920s, the region has undergone extreme boom-and-bust cycles because of its dependence on the industry, and it still produces 20 percent of the nation's oil. Nevertheless, Midlanders wax nostalgic for the late 1970s, when the town supposedly boasted more millionaires per capita than anywhere else on earth.

'People who think Bush has the values of blue-collar Texans need to have their heads examined.' —Labor leader Dally Willis

Even the most ardent Bush supporters acknowledge that those days are gone for good. "Oil production peaked in the Permian Basin in 1971 and has been declining ever since," said Bob Trentham, director of the Center for Energy and Economic Diversification at the Permian Basin campus of the University of Texas. Trentham explained that Midland has lost hundreds of high-paying jobs in the oil industry since 2000. Skilled positions in the geology and petroleum engineering fields have been partially replaced by low-paying service-industry jobs. He pointed to a new Cingular Wireless call center as an example of why the city's unemployment rate has stayed near the national average at 4.8 percent, despite the exodus of almost every major oil company from the region. Since 2000, he said, oil companies like Chevron-Texaco and Phillips-Conoco have consolidated and sold the majority of their operations in Midland. As a result, the town's prestige as a major oil center has suffered, and per capita income has dropped from 2000 to 2002. Nevertheless, Midland's population (116,000) continues to grow, as workers turn their backs on the region's fickle oil industry for lower-paying jobs in the retail and service industries.

The effects of the economic transformation are visible everywhere. In 2000, Mobil moved its entire workforce of 170 to Houston, leaving the twelve-story Mobil Building downtown virtually empty. Today, downtown Midland feels like a ghost city of glass and steel. Even though crude-oil prices have rebounded since 2000 to record highs, there is general agreement that a way of life is coming to an end. "The high-paying jobs with the big oil companies have been leaving for ten years," says Rosen. "They aren't coming back." According to one North Texas University study, the Permian Basin's oil industry will be extinct within twenty years. The reason, experts say, has to do with the high cost of extracting crude oil from mature fields. The remaining oil in the once-flush basin is trapped in deep-down rocks, sometimes 10,000 feet below the surface. "It's not like people make an extra dollar in profit every time the price of oil goes up a dollar," Trentham said. "Operating costs in the Permian Basin run anywhere from $3 to $6 a barrel—compared to less than $1 in Saudi Arabia."

Other people in the Permian Basin say that it doesn't make sense to isolate Midland's economy from the surrounding region, since most of the blue-collar workers in the oilfields live outside the Tall City. So while Bush claims that to understand Midland is to understand him, Arlo Chavira points down the highway. "To really understand Midland, you've got to understand Odessa as well," said Chavira, the Democratic candidate for Texas House of Representatives District 81. "The people in Midland own the businesses that the people in Odessa work at." Odessa is roughly the same size as Midland but has more poverty, more minorities, and has suffered more casualties in the Iraq War than Midland. Odessa's only advantage over Midland, people agree, is the Permian Panthers high school football team—the subject of H.G. Bissinger's notorious *Friday Night Lights*.

In reality, a more accurate picture of the region's economy should include the fifteen counties officially classified by the State of Texas as the Permian Basin. According to a 2001 report by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, the Permian Basin as a whole lags behind the rest of Texas in almost every health and economic well-being indicator measured by the state. The report found that per capita incomes were 22 percent lower than in the rest of the state, while poverty and unemployment were higher. In social welfare categories, things were even worse. Over one quarter of the region's children had no health insurance, and in Ector County—Odessa's district—26 percent of all households reported hunger as a problem. While Bush continues to tout the family values he learned as boy in Midland as keys to his character, the HHSC report noted that juvenile delinquency and teenage pregnancy rates in his home region continue to be above the state's average, while incidences of elderly abuse and neglect are twice as likely to occur in the Permian as other regions of Texas.

"People who think Bush has the values of blue-collar Texans need to have their heads examined," Dally Willis, the crusty president of the Permian Basin Central Labor Union, said at a Labor Day picnic for local political candidates. "He hasn't pushed one program to help the working people of this state." As a result, Willis claims, "There's an underground swell of support for Kerry here." Kerry may not beat Bush on his home turf, Willis said, "but come November, some people are going to be shocked."

Willis's claim might sound naïve, but the 84-year-old has been actively involved in Texas politics since the 1940s and remembers helping Democrat Kent Hance beat Bush in a 1978 Congressional race. Back then, he says, West Texans saw Bush as a yuppie Easterner who didn't understand working people. Bush has had twenty-five years to cultivate a Texas swagger, but Willis thinks Texans are once again questioning his authenticity. "People are starting to ask how someone who never held down a steady job in Midland can understand working people." ■

Russell Cobb is a freelance writer based in Austin, Texas.

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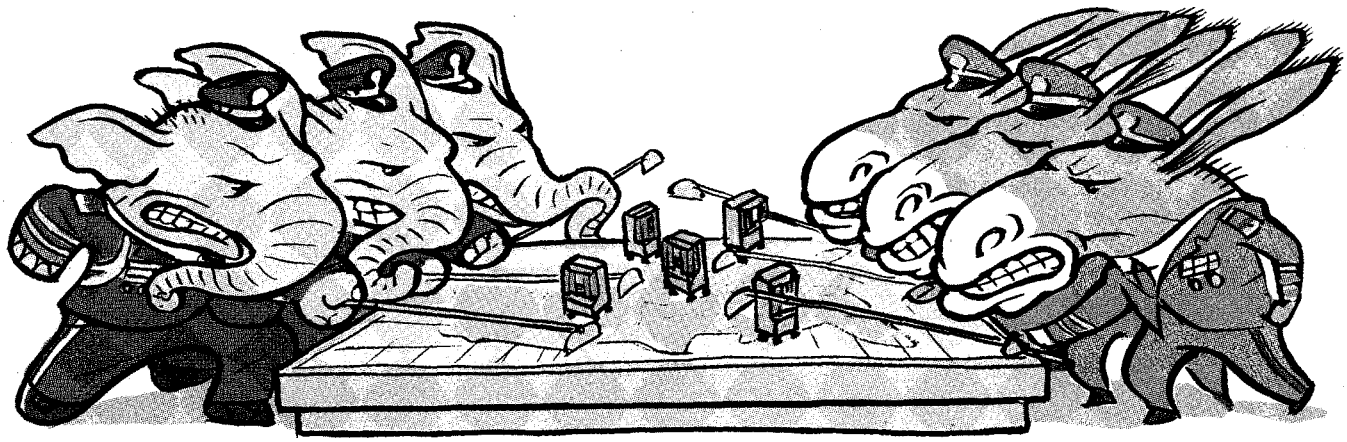

LARS LEETARU

Under the Veil, Who's for Kerry?

GARY YOUNGE

This article is the final one in a series looking at swing states, and swing constituencies, in the 2004 presidential election.
—The Editors

Driving down Michigan Avenue in Dearborn, a woman in a chador takes her hand off the steering wheel of her SUV to light a Marlboro. Through the half-open window she exhales smoke and Lebanese pop music. As she turns into the Dunkin' Donuts her bumper reveals a frayed sticker: VOTE KERRY/EDWARDS.

Dearborn, a suburb of Detroit, is the hub of Arab America. When the car plants of the Motor City had attracted all the labor they could from African-Americans fleeing poverty and tyranny in the Deep South, it went for those fleeing poverty and war from the Global South—particularly Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq. There are more Arab-Americans in California and New York, and, according to the Arab American Institute (AAI), roughly 3.5 million in the United States, but nowhere is there a greater concentration than here. A third of Dearborn is of Arab extraction, and Detroit is the biggest Iraqi city outside Iraq. It is by no means typical. "Unlike anywhere else in America, you could live your whole life in Dearborn in an Arab-American bubble," says Jennifer Salan of the AAI. But where electoral politics are concerned, that is important. Democrats won Michigan by five percentage points in 2000; Arab-Americans constitute 5 percent of the state's votes.

Indeed, Arab-Americans are a sizable force in many swing states, including Ohio, Pennsylvania and Florida. In a third of the swing states needed to win the Electoral College, Arab-Americans make up more than the margin between the two candidates. What is more, unlike African-American voters in Detroit, who have been loyal to the Democrats, Arab-Americans are up for grabs. In 2000 they backed George W. Bush. This year they are leaning, somewhat half-heartedly, toward his Democratic challenger, John Kerry. In a close race that will be decided in just a few places, Arab-Americans are a rare and precious phenomenon—a swing constituency in several swing states. "In an election this close any small group makes a difference, and this is one of them," says James Zogby, head of the AAI. Zogby says that based on current polls, about 160,000 Arab-American votes in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Florida and Michigan will go from Republican to Democrat. "What a party loses in one place they have to pick up somewhere else," he says.

"It's not a community that any party has a lock on, especially a community like this one, where 60 percent weren't born here," says Ismael Ahmed, executive director of ACCESS. The group, based in Dearborn, is the largest Arab-American social service agency in the country. Ahmed adds, "We're not really committed to either party." The Arab American Political Action Committee (AAPAC), after endorsing Bush in 2000, this year endorsed Representative Dennis Kucinich in the Democratic primary and Kerry for President.

To understand the hopes that were dashed over the past four years, recall the presidential debate in Winston-Salem four years ago, when Bush declared that the racial profiling of Arab-Americans was "not what America is all about." Said Bush, "We need to find out where racial profiling occurs and do something about it." "You have to ask yourself why it took such a small thing to secure our votes," says Jumana Judeh, vice chair of the American Arab Chamber of Commerce, who argued for endorsing Democratic contender Al Gore. "Someone recognized our votes. Someone noticed us." Add to that the fact that Gore had a Jewish running mate (Joseph Lieberman) with a record of being staunchly pro-Israel, and the Republicans looked to many Arab-Americans like their best bet. On polling day Bush beat Gore 45 to 38 percent in the Arab-American community, while Green candidate Ralph Nader (who is of Lebanese descent) received 13 percent.

Then came September 11. While none of the hijackers had American citizenship and Dearborn is home to few Saudis, the community felt besieged. Under Bush, not only profiling but detentions, investigations and deportations became the "Ameri-

Gary Younge, New York correspondent for the Guardian, *is the author of* No Place Like Home: A Black Briton's Journey Through the Deep South.

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Plotting an Ohio Surprise

Philosophy student Julian Johannesen and photographer Cosby Lindquist have been encamped in the neighborhoods of Columbus, Ohio, for more than a year. Both were inspired back then after hearing an Al Franken speech on C-SPAN to go through the Camp Wellstone activist training program, developed by the late senator's sons and supporters. Now they knock on doors, show voters a short video about job losses on their Palm Pilots, ask about their issue interests and favored candidate in the election, and track results to download later from their Palm Pilots into central computer files. As part of a $125 million voter-turnout operation in thirteen key states run by America Coming Together, they returned in mid-October to a poor working-class neighborhood in a swing city of a crucial swing state where ACT had been registering and educating voters.

Johannesen and Lindquist are among the ground troops mobilized by America Votes, a loose coalition of thirty-three national groups—from new formations like ACT and MoveOn.org to well-established institutions like the AFL-CIO and Planned Parenthood—coordinating efforts to register, educate and mobilize voters in unprecedented ways. America Votes and groups like ACT, one of several participating 527 groups—named after the tax-code provision regulating them—are offspring of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform legislation, which bans "soft money" donations but allows donors (from rich individuals like George Soros to labor unions) to channel large contributions to the 527 groups, which cannot coordinate with the Kerry campaign or the Democrats. (Adding to the strategic confusion, a single organization—like the Sierra Club—may have three or four distinct operations, some partisan and some nonpartisan, with different rules about funding, advocacy and cooperation.) But America Votes is also the offspring of organized labor's revival, since 1995, of person-to-person politicking at the workplace and in working-class communities, which has greatly boosted labor's share of the vote and shaped even Republican counterstrategies.

"I'm unemployed," Teana Foggie, a 31-year-old African-American woman explained to ACT's Johannesen, echoing other stories on the street of plants closed and jobs lost. "That's why I'm not voting for Bush." Down the street, 55-year-old Paul Buchanan, a white former Air Force munitions expert with impressive muttonchops, was equally concerned about the economy and the war in Iraq. "We are the aggressors," he said. "That's wrong."

On election day in Ohio, 250 paid ACT canvassers (who claim to have talked to more than a million Ohio voters over more than a year), another 12,000 paid workers, dozens of staff from other America Votes operations, about 5,000 America Votes volunteers and an unprecedented organized labor army of union staff and volunteers will be making sure such voters get to the polls. In a state that Gore lost by 3.5 percent (166,000 votes) after abandoning it, there may be as many as 700,000 new voters, overwhelmingly from strongly Democratic counties (including 160,000 from the Cleveland area, five times the number registered in 2000). ACT claims to have registered 85,000, and other America Votes partners—including groups focused on youth and minorities—another 215,000. If ACT's experience last year in Philadelphia is a guide, organizers will guarantee that these new voters turn out much as veteran voters do, even though, being younger and poorer, they are statistically less likely to vote.

At the national and state levels, America Votes partner groups tried to reduce duplication and coordinate efforts. In Cleveland there was a master calendar for sending registrars to public events so groups knew who was covering what. While there was no attempt to adopt a common message, discussions of what worked influenced organizational strategies. For example, ACORN, a low-income-community group, changed its message as a result of America Votes discussions to emphasize hopes for regaining a stronger economic future, not just the trauma of past job losses.

"We set out to do specific things that aren't glamorous—share polling, training, build local tables where people would share their work, build an infrastructure for volunteers," says America Votes president Cecile Richards. "That's what happened. I'm amazed and heartened by how the progressive community did what it had to do to be strategic and effective."

The actual work is done by the partners, who still occasionally trip over one another but are much more effective than they would be without the cooperation. Nationally ACT has 2,461 full-time canvassers, and another 1,100 from the Service Employees International Union's "Heroes" program, which pays workers to take months off their jobs to do political work. "We set out to build the largest voter-mobilization program in American history," said ACT chief executive officer Steve Rosenthal. Although the program varies among the states, "we focus heavily on failures of this Administration: The economy stinks, it can't fund healthcare, Iraq is a quagmire."

"The level of effort in Ohio to register and get out the vote is extraordinary," says John Green, director of the Bliss Institute at the University of Akron. "We haven't seen anything like this in living memory." Although Republicans have also expanded their ground game in Ohio, Richards, Rosenthal and progressive organizers there say it pales in comparison with their efforts. "It's not just the earlier effort with more resources" that has yielded results for progressives, says veteran Ohio political strategist Gerald Austin, "but people weren't stepping on each other. It's been successful because of cooperation."

Whatever the outcome of the election, some participants want the coalition to continue. "It's a way, after the election, to build allies, and hopefully we can work together," says Sierra Club Midwest representative Glen Brand. Others are more skeptical, but much will depend on decisions by funders. In any case, the experience has taught some lessons. "Regardless of whether this formation goes forward, some of these organizations have fundamentally changed how to do politics and will never go back to the day of doing our thing and hoping it adds up," Richards says. "There's a fundamental shift in what people realize they can do collectively."

DAVID MOBERG

David Moberg, a senior editor at In These Times, *writes frequently for* The Nation *on labor issues.*

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can way" for the Arab-American community. "It was a total sea change," says Ahmed, describing how Arab-Americans went from being below the radar to being in the spotlight and physically at risk. Hate crimes went up fivefold. At the same time, we went to war with Afghanistan and Iraq. And we were told that this is a war without end. All of that makes Arab-Americans feel at risk."

Accusing Bush of betrayal, the Arab-American community started shopping around for another candidate. Most backed Howard Dean in the Democratic primaries. When Kerry emerged the winner, they went with him. Initially they were enthusiastic. A poll of Arab-Americans by the AAI taken in Michigan, Ohio, Florida and Pennsylvania in July showed Kerry leading Bush 51 percent to 24 percent with Nader at 13 percent. By September, the split was down to 49 to 31, with a large number of undecideds. "There will be a ceiling for the President," says Zogby. "And I think he's reached it. The question is: Do the rest vote for Kerry or not vote at all? Many of those in the undecided or even in the Nader category would switch to the Democrat, but have not yet found a reason to do so."

On October 9, when Democratic vice-presidential candidate John Edwards came to Detroit, Judeh went to the gym. Earlier in the week, during the vice-presidential debate, Edwards had responded to a question about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by sympathizing with Israeli victims of suicide bombers. But in a week that saw Israel launch its bloodiest incursion into Gaza in four years, he hardly mentioned Palestinians. "After I heard that I thought, I'm not going to go out and cheer for him," says Judeh, who attended the Democratic National Convention this year. "I was a loyal Democrat. I distributed the tickets. But I wasn't going to go. We don't expect them to be pro-Palestinian. But they won't even say, 'We support a just peace in the Middle East.'"

So while there is much loathing for Bush, there is little love, as yet, for Kerry. "They are not giving us anything to work with at a grassroots level," says Fay Beydoun, who runs the AAI chapter in Michigan. "People are very anti-Bush, but we need to motivate them to go out and vote for Kerry and Edwards, and they don't make it easy." Along with their concerns about the economy and education, this is just one more factor that Arab-Americans share with the rest of the nation. The lack of enthusiasm for Kerry "is not just a problem with Arabs," says Abed Hammoud, a founder and the current president of AAPAC. "That's true for the African-Americans I talk to. I think it's true across the board." ■

NOT BEING 'MIDDLE CLASS,' THE POOR HAVE BEEN INVISIBLE IN THIS CAMPAIGN.

Straight Down the Middle

EYAL PRESS

In late August, a few days before George W. Bush delivered his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, the Kensington Welfare Rights Union led several hundred protesters through the streets of Manhattan on a march in support of poor people's rights. At the front of the procession, beneath a banner emblazoned with the slogan DISAPPEARED: HIDING THE POOR, was Patricia Lewis. A wheelchair-bound African-American woman, Lewis lives in Section 8 housing in Harlem. She was there to protest the Bush Administration's repeated attempts to slash funding for Section 8, a federal program that provides 2 million low-income familes with housing vouchers each year. But Lewis's indignation was not directed solely at Bush. A few weeks earlier she'd gone to Boston to serve as a delegate at the Democratic convention. There, too, she'd been appalled at how little the plight of the poor had figured in the speeches of her party's leaders. "I was very disappointed," she said.

LARS LEETARU

It's not hard to fathom why. For all the energy President Bush and John Kerry have expended on courting swing voters over the past six months, neither candidate has paid much attention to a segment of the population whose size has grown steadily in recent years: the poor. According to the latest Census Bureau report, 35.9 million Americans lived in poverty in 2003, the third consecutive year the figure has increased. Of this total, 15.3 million lived in extreme poverty—meaning they subsisted on less than half the official poverty line of $18,810 for a family of four. The number of Americans in the latter category has grown by 3 million since Bush took office. It is the highest level since the Census Bureau began collecting such data three decades ago.

These are trends you would think John Kerry and the Democrats would be taking pains to highlight: The Bush Administration has, after all, staked a lot on the claim that its brand of conservatism is a compassionate one. "In the quiet of American conscience, we know that deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation's promise," Bush proclaimed in his 2001 inaugural address, this before pushing through two massive tax cuts that overwhelmingly benefit the rich.

But while Kerry has not hesitated to tell Americans that Bush's economic policies are failing them, he has rarely placed the emphasis on how those policies have exacerbated the suffering of the least advantaged. When it comes to poverty, says Arnie Graf of the Industrial Areas Foundation, an alliance of citizens' organizations founded by the legendary social activist Saul Alinsky, "it feels to us like we have bipartisan neglect. Maybe there's a tailor-made speech in a particular place, and Kerry speaks to it more than Bush does, but I don't hear any systematic message."

To the extent there has been one, the systematic message of the

Eyal Press is a Nation *contributing writer.*

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Kerry campaign has revolved not around the poor but "working families" and the middle class: the segment of the population whose travails the Senator from Massachusetts endlessly plays up on the stump, and whose experiences in turn permeate the columns of the liberal pundits and columnists covering him. Recently, during a campaign stop in Florida, Kerry told a crowd he had a message for every "middle-class American family.... I've got your back. I've got your back because I know what you're going through." The choice in the coming election, he explained, is between a President "who gives more and more to those with the most" and a "new choice for the great middle class and all those struggling to join it." This is the language of liberalism in the era of George W. Bush, a language aimed at swing voters who want better jobs and more affordable healthcare but who don't necessarily sympathize with the struggles of inner-city residents or the chronically unemployed. It is a poll-tested message geared to addressing the anxieties of the middle class, with the emphasis placed on expanding opportunity for all Americans rather than introducing bold initiatives to benefit and empower those at the bottom of the income scale.

All of which is, in the eyes of some progressive strategists, exactly as it should be. There is, after all, no clearer evidence that the Bush Administration's policies aren't working for the majority of Americans than the growing insecurity among middle-class families, more and more of whom must juggle multiple jobs while struggling to pay for healthcare or send their kids to college. "Our feeling is that the middle-class squeeze, as it gets more illuminated, provides the best lens through which to see the failure of social and economic policy," says Andrea Batista Schlesinger, executive director of the Drum Major Institute, a nonprofit organization that has highlighted how trends ranging from the outsourcing of jobs to the declining value of the minimum wage have imperiled the future of the middle class.

For too long, Schlesinger argues, progressives have focused on championing the interests of disadvantaged groups while assuming that middle-class Americans can speak for themselves, an approach that has enabled conservatives to woo such voters by emphasizing social issues (and obscuring the broader effects of their policies). "The framework we are interested in changing is one in which the middle class is not part of the progressive coalition," she says. To this end, the institute has produced a scorecard ranking members of Congress from both parties on issues of concern to the middle class. This hardly necessitates ignoring the poor, Schlesinger contends, since the latter have an interest in advancing many of the same goals.

Schlesinger is right that such issues need not be viewed as a zero-sum game: In a nation where only 60 percent of people now receive health insurance through an employer, expanding access to affordable medical care is as vital to the growing ranks of the poor as to the middle class. And there are undeniable political benefits to the approach she advocates. Policies designed to broaden opportunity for all Americans are more likely to win popular support (and thus be enacted) than those promoting income redistribution or the interests of a particular racial or socioeconomic group. Moreover, at least until recently, poor people have tended not to vote in numbers proportional to their percentage of the population. In the 2000 elections, voters below the poverty line had a turnout rate of 38 percent, compared with 66 percent among those who earned twice the poverty level or more. Thus, it is assumed, an agenda tailored to the interests of the poor simply doesn't translate into enough votes.

But the low turnout rate among low-income voters can be viewed another way: as a reflection of the profound alienation poor people understandably feel toward those in power. "I think we're in a vicious circle where politicians don't expect poor people to vote in proportion to their numbers and consequently don't speak to their issues," says Deepak Bhargava, executive director of the Center for Community Change, an advocacy group based in Washington, DC. "Poor people don't hear any discussion of issues that matter to them and thus don't turn out for elections. That circle is at the root of the deafening silence [about poverty]."

In recent months, numerous voter-registration drives targeting low-income communities have been launched in an effort to break this cycle—grassroots initiatives that may well help tilt the balance in crucial swing states to John Kerry. But the organizing on the ground has yet to be reinforced by public discussion of issues of concern to the people being mobilized. Far from being a sensible bow to political reality, Bhargava argues, such silence severely hampers the prospect of advancing a progressive political agenda over the long term. "I think there is an almost unspoken consensus in parts of the progressive community that poverty isn't a winning issue," he says, "and that view is buttressed by an army of political consultants. But progressives have only made progress in advancing social justice in this country when we've grown the number of people who participate in politics and civil life. Without a serious effort to engage low-income people in policy and politics, it's hard to imagine building a majority progressive coalition."

Even in the short term, the argument that poverty is a losing issue is not as self-evident as it might seem. It does not explain, for instance, why John Edwards vaulted past Howard Dean, Dick Gephardt and other candidates in the Democratic primaries when he began talking about the "two Americas" and the moral imperative of reducing poverty. Nor does it account for why, in a poll conducted earlier this year of 1,000 people of diverse faith backgrounds, 78 percent of those surveyed said they would rather hear about a presidential candidate's plan for fighting poverty than about his position on gay marriage. (The survey was conducted

Poverty isn't the only issue the candidates have neglected to talk about. As Trudy Lieberman notes in an article about healthcare available at www.thenation.com, "While Kerry's plans would do more than Bush's to assist the poor and those without medical insurance, both candidates' proposals focus on small changes instead of calling for the wholesale rethinking that is urgently needed." In another web article that reveals unwelcome similarities between the candidates, Linda Perlstein reports that although teachers say the No Child Left Behind law is damaging instruction rather than helping kids, "the truth is that President Bush and Senator John Kerry express no vast divergence on the fundamental elements" of the law.

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jointly by Jim McLaughlin, a Republican pollster, and Tom Freedman, a Democratic consultant.) Some of the same strategists who argue that liberals should avoid harping on the plight of the poor simultaneously recognize the yearning within the electorate for leaders who can articulate a clear, compelling moral agenda.

Conservatives, at least, appear to understand this. One may view George W. Bush's faith-based initiative, which calls for the federal government to fund churches and other religious organizations so they can take the lead in providing social services to the poor, as a cynical attempt to win the votes of African-American clergy (as well as an adroit end-run around the separation of church and state). But it is also part of a calculated strategy to soften the image of the GOP and bolster its claim to represent the true interests of the disadvantaged. The latter notion might sound absurd to liberals, who have watched the Bush Administration do everything in its power to skew the distribution of wealth and income toward the affluent in recent years. But it is not absurd to voters, who hear Republicans confidently advocating policies (however misguided they may be) that target low-income people—promoting marriage, funding faith-based groups—while hearing from Democrats...nothing. Five years ago, Jason DeParle published an essay in *The Washington Monthly*, "The Silence of the Liberals," in which he pointed out the irony. "It is striking how little liberals have to say about the poor while conservatives glow and boast," DeParle observed. "To the extent that there's a national conversation about poverty, conservatives now control it."

Of course, there was a reason for this. By the time DeParle was writing, liberals had spent several decades struggling to defend a welfare system that Republicans used as a battering ram against them, an effort that culminated in Bill Clinton's signing of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act. Conservatives have controlled the debate about poverty ever since, one could argue, because they won it. But, as DeParle noted then and as he further amplifies in his new book, *American Dream*, an in-depth examination of how welfare reform has played out in Wisconsin, ending welfare-as-we-knew-it hardly put the problem of deeply entrenched poverty to rest. It hasn't solved the crisis of spiraling housing costs facing millions of low-income families. It hasn't provided childcare and other essential services (or for that matter a living wage) to millions of single mothers who have joined the workforce. It didn't stop 45 million Americans from going without healthcare last year. Nor did it address the problem of the residential isolation of the poor—shored up by exclusionary zoning policies and woefully inadequate public transportation—which, in the view of Angela Glover Blackwell, president of the advocacy group PolicyLink, is the single greatest barrier to opportunity for residents of the nation's inner-city neighborhoods.

The fact that conservatives no longer have welfare to kick around when such issues come up is, one could argue, not a problem for progressives but an opportunity. As Dalton Conley, a sociologist at New York University, observes, removing the specter of the lazy, undeserving "welfare queen" from the debate has made it far easier for politicians to talk about poor people without worrying about provoking a (racially inflected) backlash. Peter Edelman, a one-time Robert Kennedy aide and renowned expert on poverty, agrees. For all its problems, he says, one undeniably good thing that came out of welfare reform is that "the public isn't as angry [at poor people] anymore."

To criticize John Kerry for not taking advantage of this is not to suggest that he would do no better than Bush in addressing the needs of poor people were he elected. Kerry has advocated raising the minimum wage by 36 percent (to $7 an hour) over the next three years, an increase he claims will help 7 million working people escape poverty. His health plan calls for having the federal government extend coverage to all children in families below the poverty line, which would then enable states to cover those with incomes up to three times this level (Kerry would pay for this by rolling back Bush's tax cuts for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans). It's not universal coverage, but an analysis by Kenneth Thorpe of Emory University estimates the plan would provide 27 million currently uninsured Americans with medical care.

Nor would Kerry appoint people like Alphonso Jackson as head of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, who believes poverty is merely a state of mind from which the indigent must liberate themselves. The tone of the discussion in Washington on issues ranging from housing to healthcare would undoubtedly grow more sensible and more humane. These are not minor differences. Even so, the fact remains that at the level of vision and strategy, the Kerry campaign has passed up the opportunity to articulate anything that can remotely be characterized as a bold antipoverty agenda. The ideas liberals present these days that deal with poverty—to the extent they are even willing to discuss them—tend to be framed around the concerns and anxieties of the middle class. The fact that poor people may also benefit is rarely mentioned, almost as if this is incidental or even embarrassing.

"At some point, we're going to need to have a conversation about how to respond to things the market doesn't take care of," says Deepak Bhargava. Democrats will need to find the courage, in other words, to remind Americans that not everyone can be lifted into the middle class merely by kicking them off the welfare rolls; that, in a country with sluggish employment, a rental housing crisis in many cities and hundreds of communities where good jobs (not to mention adequate training and education) simply don't exist, repairing and strengthening the social safety net is necessary as well.

"We're running a country in which we have literally millions of people who are outside any definition of inclusion," says Edelman. Until more Democrats are willing to talk about this, the 15 million Americans living in conditions of extreme destitution will continue to remain invisible. Conservatives will continue to claim that they're the ones with the fresh ideas about poverty. And people like Angela Perry will continue to wonder whether both candidates in the presidential election this year are out of touch with reality. Perry, like Patricia Lewis, attended the poor people's march during the Republican National Convention. She traveled to the event with a group of low-income women from Louisville, Kentucky. "We need better childcare, better housing, jobs, education," she said in explaining why she'd decided to make the trip. Did she think George W. Bush and the Republicans sincerely cared about the poor? "No," she answered flatly. And what about the Democrats?

She paused. "No comment," she smiled, and then exchanged a knowing look with the women standing next to her, not one of whom ventured an alternative opinion. ■

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Public races to get dollars by deadline

The rush to get them at Face Value may predict our next president

By Laura Fisher
Universal Media Syndicate

Citizens across the nation are jamming National Hot Line phones in an effort to get the new Campaign Dollars for their favorite candidate.

So far, George W. Bush is ahead in the first round of a very tight race to get the special Dollar Bills.

And right now, they are the hottest items around.

They are the 2004 Presidential Campaign Dollar Bills, featuring candidates George W. Bush and John F. Kerry. And everyone is trying to get their hands on one.

The highly collectible 2004 Campaign Dollars are made with genuine U.S. legal tender Bills. A detailed custom portrait of the candidate is applied by the Monetary Exchange to create this campaign collectible. "So, anyone who spends these special historic treasures would be foolish," explains John T. White, Executive Director of the U.S. Monetary Exchange. "The potential historic value of these collector's items could be so much more."

FIRST TABULATION

RESULTS OF THE FIRST PUBLIC RELEASE:

✓**BUSH 53.1%**
KERRY 46.9%

At first, it looked like those who missed the first Public Offering would be left out. That's because all the Bills in the U. S. Monetary Exchange's first release sold out almost immediately.

But, it has been confirmed that a controlled second release is being issued to the general public, and we will tell you how you can get yours.

The hard to find Bills could be difficult to come by. Dealers may try to grab them up on speculation that they could produce a huge windfall for their children or grandchildren. No one knows exactly what they will be worth someday because collectibles always fluctuate. But, if parents or grandparents had saved a Teddy Roosevelt campaign button, it could now list for up to $3,000.00.

"It's no wonder people are trying to get these popular Bills when you look at the current market for historic treasures from past elections. A vintage Presidential Currency collection recently listed for $5,750.00 on a popular online auction, and a Ronald Reagan Inaugural Medallion was listed at $3,295.00," White said.

The smartest collectors are setting aside their political preferences to get the Bills for both candidates, so they can have the complete Presidential Election set for 2004.

"Complete collections are always the most desirable. Just imagine how much more a matched set of 1860 Lincoln-Douglas campaign posters would be worth today."

"Savvy collectors also know that items for losing candidates can become valuable. A newspaper with the famous 'Dewey Wins' headline from the 1948 campaign is now worth up to $800.00," said White. "Most everyone wants a complete set with both candidates, and they want extras to give as gifts to the children and grandchildren."

To discourage hoarding, dealers must submit requests in writing for 10 or more banded packs of 5 Bills. But, the general public can get what they need by calling the National Direct Hotline at **1-800-755-4998** now and asking for **Dept. BK877** "Limits for dealers will be strictly enforced," White said.

How to get them

The U.S. Monetary Exchange is releasing the popular 2004 Presidential Campaign Dollar Bills to the general public. Call the **National Direct Hotline 1-800-755-4998, ask for Dept BK877.** The standard $9 processing fee plus shipping gets you a banded five-pack of the vault fresh, crisp new U.S. legal tender Campaign Dollars at face value. Satisfaction is guaranteed.

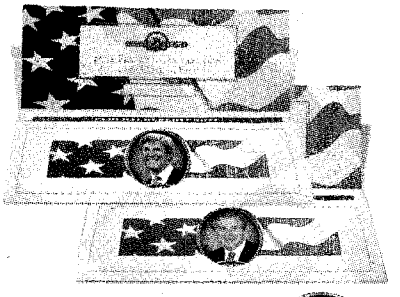
HISTORIC VALUE: If grandparents had saved a Teddy Roosevelt Campaign Button, it could list for $3,000.00 today.

LEGAL TENDER: They are made with real U.S. legal tender Bills. The Monetary Exchange then applies a detailed custom portrait of each candidate.

How much are they listed for today?

Values of collectibles fluctuate and there are never any guarantees, but just look at how much these past historic presidential items are listed for today.

Historic Election Item	*Today's List*
Vintage U.S. Currency Presidents Collection	*$5,750.00*
Truman "60 Million People Working" Button	*$1,630.99*
Teddy Roosevelt Campaign Button	*$3,000.00*
1912 Democratic Convention Emblem	*$2,499.00*
Truman/Dewey "Dewey Wins" Newspaper	*$800.00*
Vintage Collection of Campaign Buttons	*$1,999.99*
Ronald Reagan Inaugural Medallion	*$3,295.00*
1976 Carter Peanut Handle Campaign Cane	*$450.00*



GIFT: The first 10,000 people even get these special patriotic red, white and blue 2004 Presidential Election Protective Display Wallets for each Dollar Bill.

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100 FACTS AND 1 OPINION: THE NON-ARGUABLE CASE AGAINST THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

IRAQ

1. The Bush Administration has spent more than $140 billion on a war of choice in Iraq.

2. The Bush Administration sent troops into battle without adequate body armor or armored Humvees.

3. The Bush Administration ignored estimates from Gen. Eric Shinseki that several hundred thousand troops would be required to secure Iraq.

4. Vice President Cheney said Americans "will, in fact, be greeted as liberators" in Iraq.

5. During the Bush Administration's war in Iraq, more than 1,000 US troops have lost their lives and more than 7,000 have been injured.

6. In May 2003 President Bush landed on an aircraft carrier in a flight suit, stood under a banner proclaiming *Mission Accomplished* and triumphantly announced that major combat operations were over in Iraq. Asked if he had any regrets about the stunt, Bush said, "You bet I'd do it again."

7. Vice President Cheney said that Iraq was "the geographic base of the terrorists who have had us under assault for many years, but most especially on 9/11." The bipartisan 9/11 Commission found that Iraq had no involvement in the 9/11 attacks and no collaborative operational relationship with Al Qaeda.

8. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said that high-strength aluminum tubes acquired by Iraq were "only really suited for nuclear weapons programs," warning, "we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud." The government's top nuclear scientists had told the Administration the tubes were "too narrow, too heavy, too long" to be of use in developing nuclear weapons and could be used for other purposes.

9. The Bush Administration has spent just $1.1 billion of the $18.4 billion Congress approved for Iraqi reconstruction.

10. According to the Administration's handpicked weapon's inspector, Charles Duelfer, there is "no evidence that Hussein had passed illicit weapons material to al Qaeda or other terrorist organizations, or had any intent to do so." After the release of the report, Bush continued to insist, "There was a risk–a real risk–that Saddam Hussein would pass weapons, or materials, or information to terrorist networks."

11. According to Duelfer, the UN inspections regime put an "economic stranglehold" on Hussein that prevented him from developing a WMD program for more than twelve years.

TERRORISM

12. After receiving a memo from the CIA in August 2001 titled "Bin Laden Determined to Attack America," President Bush continued his monthlong vacation.

13. The Bush Administration failed to commit enough troops to capture Osama bin Laden when US forces had him cornered in the Tora Bora region of Afghanistan in November 2001. Instead, they relied on local warlords.

14. The Bush Administration secured less nuclear material from sites around the world vulnerable to terrorists in the two years after 9/11 than were secured in the two years before 9/11.

15. The Bush Administration underfunded Nunn-Lugar–the program intended to keep the former Soviet Union's nuclear legacy out of the hands of terrorists and rogue states–by $45.5 million.

16. The Bush Administration has assigned five times as many agents to investigate Cuban embargo violations as it has to track Osama bin Laden's and Saddam Hussein's money.

17. According to Congressional Research Service data, the Bush Administration has underfunded security at the nation's ports by more than $1 billion for fiscal year 2005.

18. The Bush Administration did not devote the resources necessary to prevent a resurgence in the production of poppies, the raw material used to create heroin, in Afghanistan–creating a potent new source of financing for terrorists.

19. Vice President Cheney told voters that unless they elect George Bush in November, "we'll get hit again" by terrorists.

20. Even though an Al Qaeda training manual suggests terrorists come to the United States and buy assault weapons, the Bush Administration did nothing to prevent the expiration of the ban on them.

21. Despite repeated calls for reinforcements, there are fewer experienced CIA agents assigned to the unit dealing with Osama bin Laden now than there were before 9/11.

22. Before 9/11, John Ashcroft proposed slashing counterterrorism funding by 23 percent.

23. Between January 20, 2001, and September 10, 2001, the Bush Administration publicly mentioned Al Qaeda one time.

24. The Bush Administration granted the 9/11 Commission $3 million to investigate the September 11 attacks and $50 million to the commission that investigated the Columbia space shuttle crash.

25. More than three years after 9/11, just 5 percent of all cargo–including cargo transported on passenger planes–is screened.

NATIONAL SECURITY

26. During the Bush Administration, North Korea quadrupled its suspected nuclear arsenal from two to eight weapons.

27. The Bush Administration has openly opposed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, undermining nuclear nonproliferation efforts.

28. The Bush Administration has spent $7 billion this year–and plans to spend $10 billion next year–for a missile defense system that has never worked in a test that wasn't rigged.

29. The Bush Administration underfunded the needs of the nation's first responders by $98 billion, according to a Council on Foreign Relations study.

CRONYISM AND CORRUPTION

30. The Bush Administration awarded a multibillion-dollar no-bid contract to Halliburton–a company that still pays Vice President Cheney hundreds of thousands of dollars in deferred compensation each year (Cheney also has Halliburton stock options). The company then repeatedly overcharged the military for services, accepted kickbacks from subcontractors and served troops dirty food.

31. The Bush Administration told Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan about plans to go to war with Iraq before telling Secretary of State Colin Powell.

32. The Bush Administration relentlessly pushed an energy bill containing $23.5 billion in corporate tax breaks, much of which would have benefited major campaign contributors.

33. The Bush Administration paid Iraqi-exile and neocon darling Ahmad Chalabi $400,000 a month for intelligence, including fabricated claims about Iraqi WMDs. It continued to pay him for months after discovering that he was providing inaccurate information.

34. The Bush Administration installed as top officials more than 100 former lobbyists, attorneys or spokespeople for the industries they oversee.

35. The Bush Administration let disgraced Enron CEO Ken Lay–a close friend of President Bush–help write its energy policy.

36. Top Bush Administration officials accepted $127,600 in jewelry and other presents from the Saudi royal family in 2003, including diamond-and-sapphire jewelry valued at $95,500 for First Lady Laura Bush.

37. Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge awarded lucrative contracts to several companies in which he is an investor, including Microsoft, GE, Sprint, Pfizer and Oracle.

38. President Bush used images of firefighters carrying flag-draped coffins through the rubble of the World Trade Center to score political points in a campaign advertisement.

THE ECONOMY

39. President Bush's top economic adviser, Greg Mankiw, said the outsourcing of American jobs abroad was "a plus for the economy in the long run."

40. The Bush Administration turned a $236 billion surplus into a $422 billion deficit.

41. The Bush Administration implemented regulations that made millions of workers ineligible for overtime pay.

42. The Bush Administration has crippled state budgets by underfunding federal mandates by $175 billion.

43. President Bush is the first President since Herbert Hoover to have a net loss of jobs–around 800,000–over a four-year term.

44. The Bush Administration gave Accenture a multibillion-dollar border control contract even though the company moved its operations to Bermuda to avoid paying taxes.

45. In 2000, candidate George W. Bush said, "the vast majority of my tax cuts go to the bottom end of the spectrum." He passed the tax cuts, but the top 20 percent of earners received 68 percent of the benefits.

46. In 2000, candidate George W. Bush promised to pay down the national debt to a historically low level. As of September 30, the national debt stood at $7,379,052,696,330.32, a record high.

47. As major corporate scandals rocked the nation's economy, the Bush Administration reduced the enforcement of corporate tax law–conducting fewer audits, imposing fewer penalties, pursuing fewer prosecutions and making virtually no effort to prosecute corporate tax crimes.

48. The Bush Administration increased tax audits for the working poor.

49. In 2000, candidate George W. Bush promised to protect the Social Security surplus. As President, he spent all of it.

50. The Bush Administration proposed slashing funding for the largest federal

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public housing program, putting 2 million families in danger of losing their housing.

51. The Bush Administration did nothing to prevent the minimum wage from falling to an inflation-adjusted fifty-year low.

EDUCATION

52. The Bush Administration underfunded the No Child Left Behind Act by $9.4 billion.

53. In 2000, candidate George W. Bush promised to increase the maximum federal scholarship, or Pell Grant, by 50 percent. Instead, each year he has been in office he has frozen or cut the maximum scholarship amount.

54. The Bush Administration's Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, called the National Education Association–a union of teachers–a "terrorist organization."

HEALTHCARE

55. The Bush Administration, in violation of the law, refused to allow Medicare actuary Richard Foster to tell members of Congress the actual cost of their Medicare bill. Instead, the Administration repeated a figure it knew was $100 billion too low.

56. The nonpartisan GAO concluded the Bush Administration created illegal, covert propaganda–in the form of fake news reports–to promote its industry-backed Medicare bill.

57. The Bush Administration stunted research that could lead to new treatments for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes, spinal injuries, heart disease and muscular dystrophy by placing severe restrictions on the use of federal dollars for embryonic stem-cell research.

58. The Bush Administration reinstated the "global gag rule," which requires foreign NGOs to withhold information about legal abortion services or lose US funds for family planning.

59. The Bush Administration authorized twenty companies that have been charged with fraud at the federal or state level to offer Medicare prescription drug cards to seniors.

60. The Bush Administration created a prescription drug card for Medicare that locks seniors into one card for up to a year but allows the corporations offering the cards to change their prices once a week.

61. The Bush Administration blocked efforts to allow Medicare to negotiate cheaper prescription drug prices for seniors.

62. At the behest of the french fry industry, the Bush Administration USDA changed their definition of fresh vegetables to include frozen french fries.

63. In a case before the Supreme Court, the Bush Administration sided with HMOs–arguing that patients shouldn't be allowed to sue HMOs when they are improperly denied treatment. With the Administration's help, the HMOs won.

64. The Bush Administration went to court to block lawsuits by patients who were injured by defective prescription drugs and medical devices.

65. President Bush signed a Medicare law that allows companies that reduce healthcare benefits for retirees to receive substantial subsidies from the government.

66. Since President Bush took office, more than 5 million people have lost their health insurance.

67. The Bush Administration blocked a proposal to ban the use of arsenic-treated lumber in playground equipment, even though it conceded it posed a danger to children.

68. One day after President Bush bragged about his efforts to help seniors afford healthcare, the Administration announced the largest dollar increase of Medicare premiums in history.

69. The Bush Administration–at the behest of the tobacco industry–tried to water down a global treaty that aimed to help curb smoking.

70. The Bush Administration has spent $270 million on abstinence-only education programs even though there is no scientific evidence demonstrating that they are effective in dissuading teenagers from having sex or reducing the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases.

71. The Bush Administration slashed funding for programs that suggested ways, other than abstinence, to avoid sexually transmitted diseases.

ENVIRONMENT

72. The Bush Administration gutted clean-air standards for aging power plants, resulting in at least 20,000 premature deaths each year.

73. The Bush Administration eliminated protections on more than 200 million acres of public land.

74. President Bush broke his promise to place limits on carbon dioxide emissions, an essential step in combating global warming.

75. Days after 9/11, The Bush Administration told people living near Ground Zero that the air was safe–even though they knew it wasn't–subjecting hundreds of people to unnecessary, debilitating ailments.

76. The Bush Administration created a massive tax loophole for SUVs–allowing, for example, the write-off of the entire cost of a new Hummer.

77. The Bush Administration put former coal-industry big shots in the government and let them roll back safety regulations, putting miners at greater risk of black lung disease.

78. The Bush Administration said that even though the weed killer atrazine was seeping into water supplies–creating, among other bizarre creatures, hermaphroditic frogs–there was no reason to regulate it.

79. The Bush Administration has proposed cutting the budget of the Environmental Protection Agency by $600 million next year.

80. President Bush broke his campaign promise to end the maintenance backlog at national parks. He has provided just 7 percent of the funds needed, according to National Park Service estimates.

RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

81. Since 9/11, Attorney General John Ashcroft has detained 5,000 foreign nationals in antiterrorism sweeps; none have been convicted of a terrorist crime.

82. The Bush Administration ignored pleas from the International Committee of the Red Cross to stop the abuse of prisoners in US custody.

83. In violation of international law, the Bush Administration hid prisoners from the Red Cross so the organization couldn't monitor their treatment.

84. The Bush Administration, without ever charging him with a crime, arrested US citizen José Padilla at an airport in Chicago, held him in a naval brig in South Carolina for two years, denied him access to a lawyer and prohibited any contact with his friends and family.

85. President Bush's top legal adviser wrote a memo to the President advising him that he can legally authorize torture.

86. At the direction of Bush Administration officials, the FBI went door to door questioning people planning on protesting at the 2004 political conventions.

87. The Bush Administration refuses to support the creation of an independent commission to investigate the abuse of foreign prisoners in American custody. Instead, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld selected the members of a commission to review the conduct of his own department.

FLIP FLOPS

88. President Bush opposed the creation of the 9/11 Commission before he supported it, delaying an essential inquiry into one of the greatest intelligence failures in American history.

89. President Bush said gay marriage was a state issue before he supported a constitutional amendment banning it.

90. President Bush said he was committed to capturing Osama bin Laden "dead or alive" before he said, "I truly am not that concerned about him."

91. President Bush said we had found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, before he admitted we hadn't found them.

92. President Bush said, "You can't distinguish between Al Qaeda and Saddam when you talk about the war on terror," before he admitted Saddam had no role in 9/11.

BIOGRAPHY

93. George Bush didn't come close to meeting his commitments to the National Guard. Records show he performed no service in a six-month period in 1972 and a three-month period in 1973.

94. In June 1990 George Bush violated federal securities law when he failed to inform the SEC that he had sold 200,000 shares of his company, Harken Energy. Two months later the company reported significant losses and by the end of that year the stock had dropped from $3 to $1.

95. When asked at an April 2004 press conference to name a mistake he made during his presidency, Bush couldn't think of one.

SECRECY

96. The Bush Administration refuses to release twenty-seven pages of a Congressional report that allegedly detail the Saudi Arabian government's connections to the 9/11 hijackers.

97. Last year the Bush Administration spent $6.5 billion creating 14 million new classified documents and securing old secrets–the highest level of spending in ten years.

98. The Bush Administration spent $120 classifying documents for every $1 it spent declassifying documents.

99. The Bush Administration has spent millions of dollars and defied numerous court orders to conceal from the public who participated in Vice President Cheney's 2001 energy task force.

100. The Bush Administration–reversing years of bipartisan tradition–refuses to answer questions from Democratic members of Congress about how the White House is spending taxpayer money.

OPINION

If the past informs the future, four more years of the Bush Administration will be a tragic period in the history of the United States and the world.

The 100 Facts were compiled by Judd Legum, deputy research director at the American Progress Action Fund. Sourced version available at www.thenation.com.

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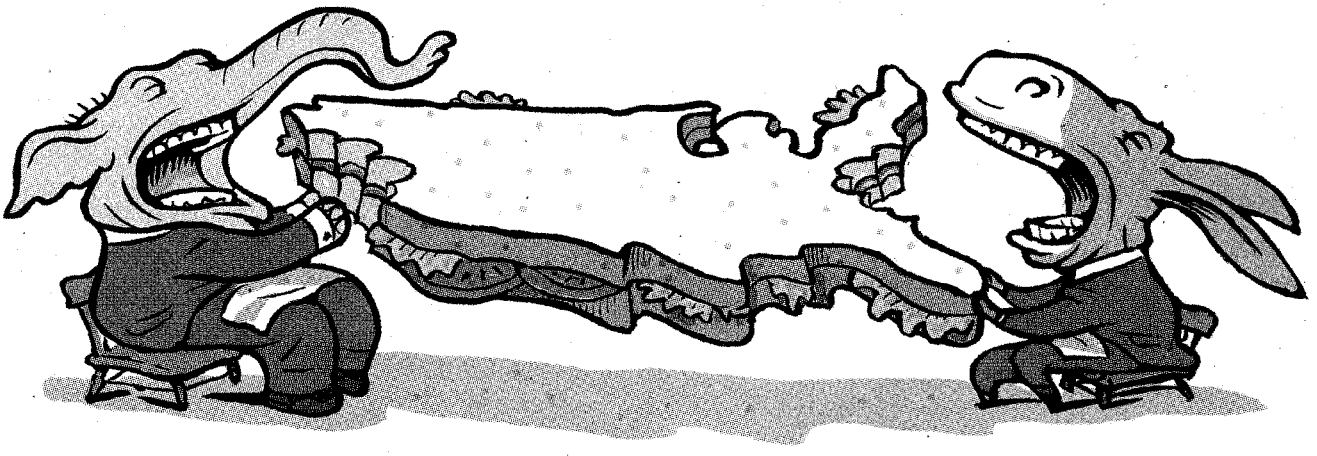

LARS LEETARU

Why I'm for Kerry

DAVID CORN

George W. Bush said Saddam Hussein's brutal regime had chemical and biological weapons and a revived nuclear weapons program. It did not. He said Saddam's government was in cahoots with Al Qaeda. It was not (according to the 9/11 Commission and the CIA). He declared that Iraq was an "immediate," "direct" and "gathering" threat. That was not so. It is undeniable: Bush took the country to war on the basis of untrue assertions. His allies maintain that he was misinformed by the intelligence community, but the evidence is clear that Bush overstated the flawed intelligence provided him and ignored important disputes among intelligence analysts. And what is worse—if that's possible—is that Bush embarked on this elective war without adequately preparing for the postinvasion period. I could go on about other Bush misdeeds—his tax cuts for the wealthy; his gargantuan deficits; his undeclared war on the environment; his weak response to job losses; his failure to address various crises in the healthcare system—but given his rash invasion of Iraq and his irresponsible handling of the war, I would vote for practically anyone—Dan Quayle, Jerry Springer, Donald Trump, Al Sharpton—over Bush. He has been derelict in his duty as Commander in Chief. He is a national security threat that must be neutralized.

Fortunately, voting for John Kerry need not be an act of desperation. He is more than an Anybody But Bush alternative. I have watched Kerry for nearly two decades in Washington. He can be frustrating. His penchant for pondering and for less-than-passionate politicking is well-known, and it has hindered his campaign this year. But during his time in the Senate, he has been a consistent—yes, consistent—champion of environmental protection, abortion rights, campaign reform and a forward-looking foreign policy. He was a leader in the battle against Bush's tax cuts for the rich. He voted against the antigay Defense of Marriage Act. He has advocated boosting the minimum wage. During this campaign, he has proposed a massive effort to develop alternative energy sources and has touted a healthcare proposal that is not national health insurance (or a "government takeover," as Bush falsely claimed) but that would extend coverage to millions.

On occasions Kerry has displayed flashes of courage. In the late 1980s and early '90s, Kerry, a former prosecutor, spearheaded investigations in the Senate that targeted the CIA's relationship with suspected drug traffickers during the *contra* war in Nicaragua; the connection between Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega and the US government; and the crimes of BCCI, a corrupt global bank frequented by drug dealers, terrorists and intelligence services (including the CIA). During the CIA-*contra*-drug inquiry, fellow Democrats asked him why he bothered engaging in such a thankless task—especially when it rendered Kerry a target of White House retribution. And during the BCCI probe, Democratic colleagues in the Senate complained because the bank was linked to prominent Democrats. Yet Kerry did not relent. All this work required guts and resolution—rarely on display in the Senate—as did Kerry's combat activity in Vietnam and his subsequent antiwar activism. He has opposed the death penalty, a brave move for a politician with national aspirations.

I could cite issue areas where Kerry has not distinguished himself. The Middle East and trade come to mind. But Kerry's shortfalls are less significant when the White House is in the hands of a man who has done (and could still do) much damage at home and abroad. Kerry's vote to authorize Bush to use force in Iraq was an error. His reasoning was theoretically plausible: Enable the President to threaten military action in order to compel a tyrant to comply with UN resolutions. Kerry did say he expected Bush to pursue inspections and diplomacy as far as possible before resorting to war. But he miscalculated. One should not give a loaded pistol to a man who cannot be trusted. Without knowing what was in his head, I suspect Kerry was influenced by political considerations. Yet as Representative Barney Frank, who has campaigned for Kerry, tells antiwar Democrats, a legislator often must choose between options presented to him or her, but a President can craft the choices. Despite Kerry's inartful descriptions of his Iraq stance, it is obvious: He would not have launched this war. That's worth the price of admission.

Moreover, Kerry, who once eloquently wondered, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?" is far better able

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Most of the differences in the way we experience life now and the way we experienced it at the beginning of the 17th century emerged because of technical advances that rely on calculus. Calculus is a beautiful idea exposing the rational workings of the world; it is part of our intellectual heritage.

Calculus is the exploration of only two ideas, both of which arise from a clear, commonsensical analysis of our everyday experience of motion.

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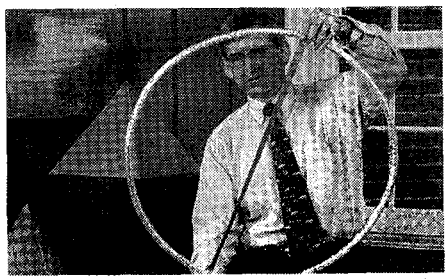

rather, it will help you see calculus around you in the everyday world.

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(and will be better positioned) to clean up—that is, try to clean up—Bush's grave mistake in Iraq. It's not that the Iraq plan Kerry has repeatedly pitched—internationalize the mess, speed up the training of Iraqi security forces, quicken the pace of reconstruction—carries any guarantee, or even likelihood, of success. It *might* work—Kerry might be able to recruit more foreign partners than the guy who told the international community to get lost—and it might not. But a man of Kerry's talents and sensibilities (internationalist and nonmessianic) will have a greater chance of fixing what could be an unfixable situation, and also of successfully contending with other challenges (most notably, the threat of loose nukes) Bush has neglected. In short, it's the man, not the plan. There is no doubt that Kerry is as committed as the current Commander in Chief to protecting the United States from the threat posed by Al Qaeda and others; he has spent years thinking, debating and legislating many aspects of national security. But he is fully aware of the perils of arrogance and hubris, and he understands the dangers of predicating foreign policy on rhetoric and doctrine rather than reality and expertise.

Kerry, an imperfect candidate, has not fired up the electorate. But he is a thoughtful (maybe too thoughtful) and intelligent man who has demonstrated that he can and will fight for certain progressive causes. He ought to win the election simply because he did not mislead the nation into war. But he offers more than that. If Kerry is elected, there may be reason not just for relief but for hope. ■

Why I'm (Slightly) for Bush

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

The election season is always hellish for people who fancy that they live by political principles, because at such a time "politics" becomes, even more than usually, a matter of show business and superficial calculation. Ever since 1980, when I bet the liberals of New York that Reagan would win easily (and didn't have to buy my own lunch for months afterward), I have sympathized with the "prisoners' dilemma" that faces liberals and leftists every four years. The shady term "lesser evil" was evolved to deal with this very trap. Should you endorse a Democrat in whom you don't really believe? Is it time for that deep-breath third-party vote, or even angry abstention, of the sort that has tortured some *Nation* readers ever since they just couldn't take Humphrey over Nixon? This magazine prints columnists who regularly describe the terms of the captivity with more emotion than I can now summon.

But absent from this triangular calculation is the irony of history. Do you know anybody who really, deeply wishes that Carter had been re-elected, or that Dukakis had won? Implicit but unstated, in the desire of the prisoner to escape, is the banal, unexciting assumption of our two-party oligopoly: Sometimes it's objectively not so bad that the "other" party actually wins. Thus I ought to begin by stating my reasons to hope for a Kerry/Edwards victory.

Given my underlying stipulation, which is that this is a single-issue election and that that is a good and necessary thing, I have no formal quarrel with the Kerry/Edwards platform. It ostensibly calls for military victory over the alliance between autocracy and jihad. It does not shade the moral distinction that has to be made between "our" imperfect civilization and those who want to turn Islamic society into a medieval but still-lethal dust bowl. (Not even by MoveOn.org are we being told, of the racist *janjaweed* death squads in Sudan, that they are the expression of pitiable, deep-seated Muslim grievances.) The Kerry camp also rightly excoriates the President and his Cabinet for their near-impeachable irresponsibility in the matter of postwar planning in Iraq.

I can't wait to see President Kerry discover which corporation, aside from Halliburton, should after all have got the contract to reconstruct Iraq's oil industry. I look forward to seeing him eat his Jesse Helms–like words, about the false antithesis between spending money abroad and "at home" (as if this war, sponsored from abroad, hadn't broken out "at home"). I take pleasure in advance in the discovery that he will have to make, that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is a more dangerous and better-organized foe than Osama bin Laden, and that Zarqawi's existence is a product of jihadism plus Saddamism, and not of any error of tact on America's part. I notice that, given the ambivalent evidence about Saddam's weaponry, Kerry had the fortitude and common sense to make the presumption of guilt rather than innocence. I assume that he has already discerned the difference between criticizing the absence of postwar planning and criticizing the presence of an anti-Saddam plan to begin with. I look forward, in other words, to the assumption of his *responsibility*.

Should the electors decide for the President, as I would slightly prefer, the excruciating personality of George Bush strikes me in the light of a second- or third-order consideration. If the worst that is said of him is true—that he is an idiotic and psychically damaged Sabbath-fanatic, with nothing between his large Texan ears—then these things were presumably just as true when he ran against Al Gore, and against nation-building and foreign intervention. It is Bush's conversion from isolationism that impresses me, just as it is the parallel lapse into isolationism on Kerry's part that makes me skeptical. You don't like "smirking"? What about the endless smirks and smarmy hints about the Administration's difficulties, whether genuine or self-imposed? The all-knowing, stupid smirks about the "secular" Saddam, or the innocuousness of prewar Iraq? The sneers about the astonishing success of our forces in Afghanistan, who are now hypocritically praised by many who opposed their initial deployment? This is to say nothing of the paranoid innuendoes I don't have to name that are now part of pseudo-"radical" rumor-mongering and defamation. Whichever candidate wins, I shall live to see these smirks banished, at least.

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair *and a visiting professor of liberal studies at New School University. His new collection,* Love, Poverty and War: Essays and Journeys, *is forthcoming from Nation Books.*

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I can visualize a Kerry victory, in other words (and can claim to have written one of the earliest essays calling attention to the merits of John Edwards). What slightly disturbs me about most liberals is their hypertense refusal to admit the corollary. "Anybody But Bush"—and this from those who decry simple-mindedness—is now the only glue binding the radical left to the Democratic Party right. The amazing thing is the literalness with which the mantra is chanted. Anybody? Including Muqtada al-Sadr? The chilling answer is, quite often, yes. This is nihilism. Actually, it's nihilism at best. If it isn't treason to the country—let us by all means not go there—it is certainly treason to the principles of the left.

One of the editors of this magazine asked me if I would also say something about my personal evolution. I took him to mean: How do you like your new right-wing friends? In the space I have, I can only return the question. I prefer them to Pat Buchanan and Vladimir Putin and the cretinized British Conservative Party, or to the degraded, mendacious populism of Michael Moore, who compares the psychopathic murderers of Iraqis to the Minutemen. I am glad to have seen the day when a British Tory leader is repudiated by the White House. An irony of history, in the positive sense, is when Republicans are willing to risk a dangerous confrontation with an untenable and indefensible status quo. I am proud of what little I have done to forward this revolutionary cause. In Kabul recently, I interviewed Dr. Masuda Jalal, a brave Afghan physician who was now able to run for the presidency. I asked her about her support for the intervention in Iraq. "For us," she said, "the battle against terrorism and against dictatorship are the same thing." I dare you to snicker at simple-mindedness like that.

I could obviously take refuge in saying that I was a Blair supporter rather than a Bush endorser, and I am in fact a member of a small international regime-change "left" that originates in solidarity with our embattled brothers and sisters in Afghanistan and Iraq, brave people who have received zero support from the American "antiwar" movement. I won't even consider any reconsideration, at least until Islamist websites start posting items that ask themselves, and not us: Can we go on taking such casualties? Have our tactics been too hideous and too stupid? Only then can anything like a negotiation begin. (Something somewhat analogous may be true, and I say it with agony, about the Israel-Palestine dispute, which stands a very slightly better chance of a decent settlement if an almost uncritically pro-Israeli Democrat is not elected.)

The President, notwithstanding his shortcomings of intellect, has been able to say, repeatedly and even repetitively, the essential thing: that we are involved in this war without apology and without remorse. He should go further, and admit the evident possibility of defeat—which might concentrate a few minds—while abjuring any notion of capitulation. Senator Kerry is also capable of saying this, but not without cheapening it or qualifying it, so that, in the *Nation* prisoners' dilemma, he is offering you the worst of both worlds. Myself, I have made my own escape from your self-imposed quandary. Believe me when I say that once you have done it, there's no going back. I have met a few other ex-hostages, and they all agree that the relief is unbelievable. I shall be meeting some of you again, I promise, and the fraternal paw will still be extended. ■

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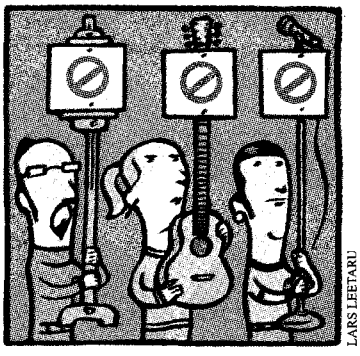
Art Makes a Difference

ALISA SOLOMON

New Canaan, Connecticut, has never been anybody's idea of a hotbed of radicalism—or even of a warm bath of liberalism. The median household income of about $141,800 is more than triple the national figure, and registered Republicans outnumber Democrats three to one. Nonetheless, this fall, an 82-year-old art center nestled among the tony town's sloping hills and vivid foliage has been featuring an exhibit with some of the most powerful dissident imagery on view anywhere in the country. Painter Adam Niklewicz, for example, has contributed a brightly arresting tempera of Uncle Sam plunging his head into the sands of the Iraqi desert. Shiela Hale has built a mixed-media voting booth festooned with mirrors, chalkboards, news articles (on casualties in Iraq and on the economics of Wal-Mart, for instance) and graffiti. ("What do citizens do when tyrants and profiteers seize power?" "A noble dream has been stolen from us and we are complicit in the theft.") A conceptual piece called "In Memoriam" by Gerald Saladyga greets viewers at the entrance: A sheaf of handouts rests on the starry section of an American flag atop a white wooden pedestal. They are lists of US soldiers killed in Iraq.


LARS LEETARU

The show is hardly typical fare for the Silvermine Galleries, but, explains gallery director Helen Klisser During, organizers of the space felt that passions around the elections were running so high, they had to respond. They invited the 326 artists in the guild affiliated with the gallery to submit pieces under the title "Political Persuasions: Left, Right and Center." Forty-two works came in. "We got nothing from the right," During says. Artists in the middle of the political spectrum didn't make much noise, either. One piece decries the stark split tearing the country, and another seems to pine for a sort of folksy patriotism. But the overall tone at Silvermine is clear enough. It prompted one disgruntled local viewer to chalk a snooty critique onto the exhibit's comment board: "The anti-Bush theme of all this is boring and unimaginative."

In fact, in highly imaginative and engaging ways, artists all over the country have been generating an accelerating torrent of anti-Bush material in every conceivable genre. It's easy to forget that just twenty months ago, the verb to be "Dixie Chicked" entered the American pop lexicon after some Clear Channel radio stations dropped the country music group from their playlists because lead singer Natalie Maines had made disparaging remarks about the President. At first, a chill swept through the cultural and entertainment worlds, leaving it to those working within activist and grassroots formations to keep the fires burning. But artists in more mainstream venues soon began to make their voices heard again. In recent months, even some of the most risk-averse big arts institutions have turned up the heat to a level not felt since the 1970 New York Art Strike Against War, Racism, Fascism, Sexism, and Repression, when major museums and galleries shut down for a day of protest. Coalescing around the urgency of defeating Bush, guerrilla theater performers, underground poster makers, mass-march puppetistas and radical interventionists find themselves joined on the public stage by swanky galleries, regional theaters, pop stars, major museums and other institutions that rely on corporate largesse or the pocketbooks of a politically diverse public.

To highlight just a few of the countless eruptions: Bruce Springsteen's raucous rock-outs in the Vote for Change tour; Pauline Oliveros's meditative "RingOut" around the World Trade Center on August 28; a pointed revival of *Major Barbara*, George Bernard Shaw's denunciation of war profiteering at the San Jose Repertory Theatre; the Voting Machine series of performances, exhibits, films and discussions in a range of arts venues in Houston; the Whitney Museum's bold linking of Vietnam and Iraq in its current exhibition "Memorials of War," and its film series "WAR! Protest in America, 1965–2004"; and the iRaq posters that have been slapped up on city walls by Los Angeles–based Forkscrew Graphics, appropriating the iconic iPod ads of silhouetted figures on a fluorescent background to show, for instance, a hooded man with fake electrodes attached to his fingers. (For a weekly national calendar of "politically relevant cultural events to help promote social change," see www.activate.us.)

The perennial, cranky old questions about art's efficacy or whether it preaches to the choir hardly seem relevant these days. At a time when the flood of information carries the untreated sewage of lies and distortions, a sharp image, stinging satire, complex drama or rousing rap offers the public an honest, if plainly partisan, response to pressing issues and opens space for unmanipulated emotion and reflective analysis. Over the past year, the public's desperation for clear articulations of its questions and for frank grappling with its doubts has shown itself in the box-office success of *Fahrenheit 9/11* as well as in the enthusiasm that has greeted smaller-scale projects around the country. At the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, for example, artistic director Gordon Edelstein presented Gip Hoppe's satire, *A New War*, an uproarious slam at jingoistic broadcast media and the arrogance of empire. "I was outraged over the lack of civic conversation about the war and felt I had to present something that could talk about these issues," Edelstein says. The play opened last January to exultant ovations. "What we said on stage wasn't really news to anyone," Edelstein recalls, "but people were so happy that anyone was saying these things out loud. It was received like manna in the wilderness and was the surprise hit of the season."

The comedian Reno has observed this shift in audiences, too,

Alisa Solomon is a journalist and theater critic in New York and a professor at the City University of New York.

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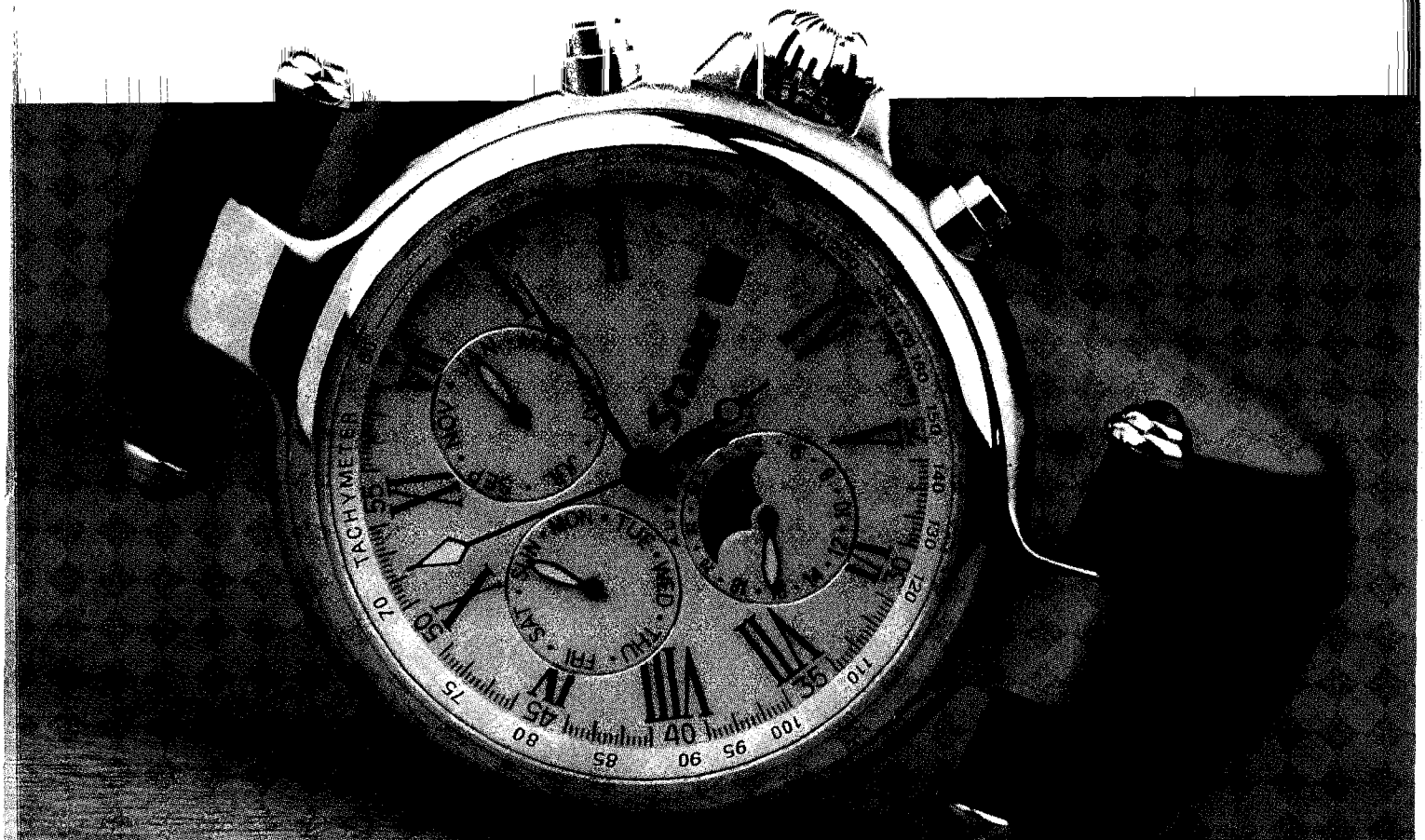

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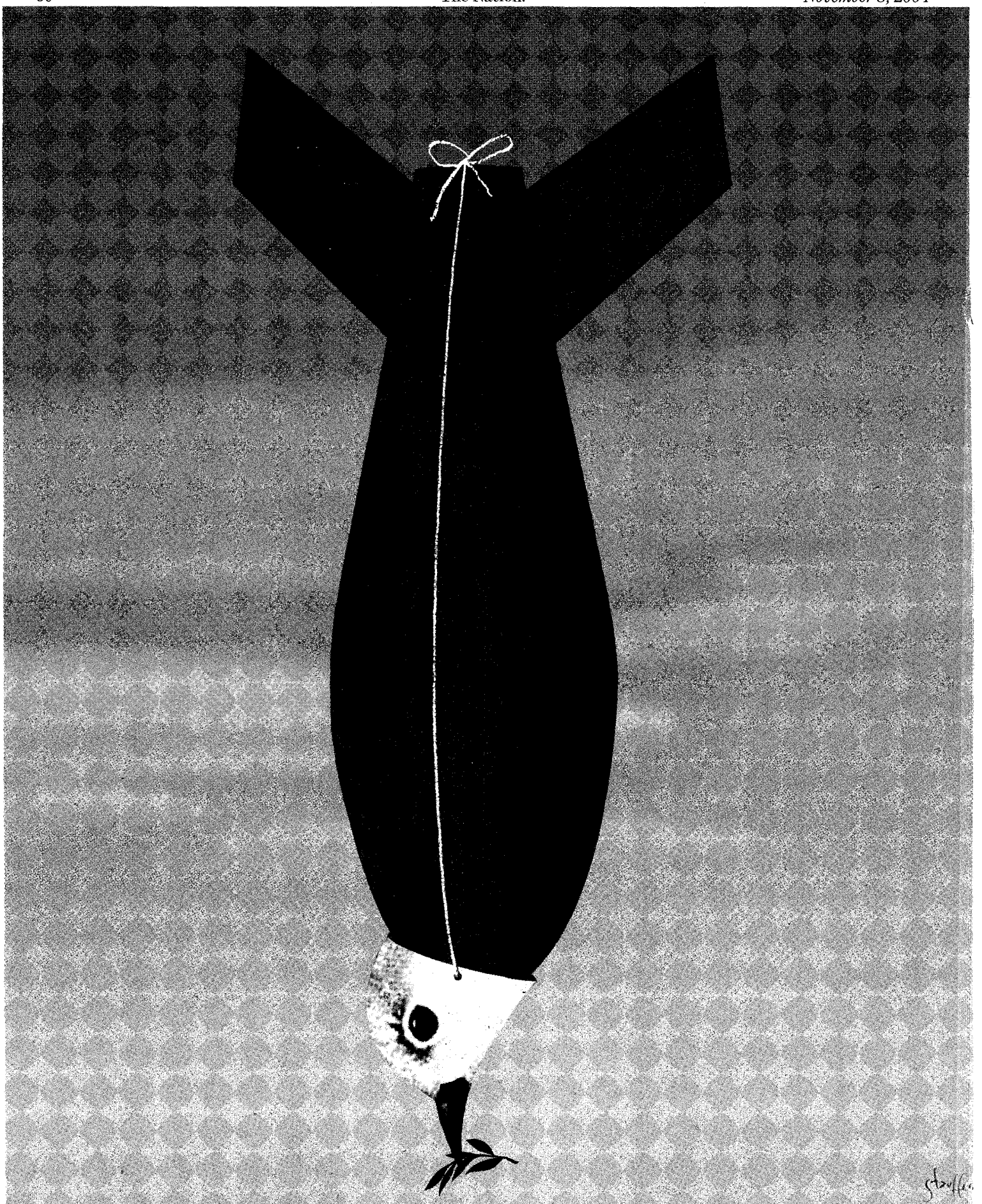

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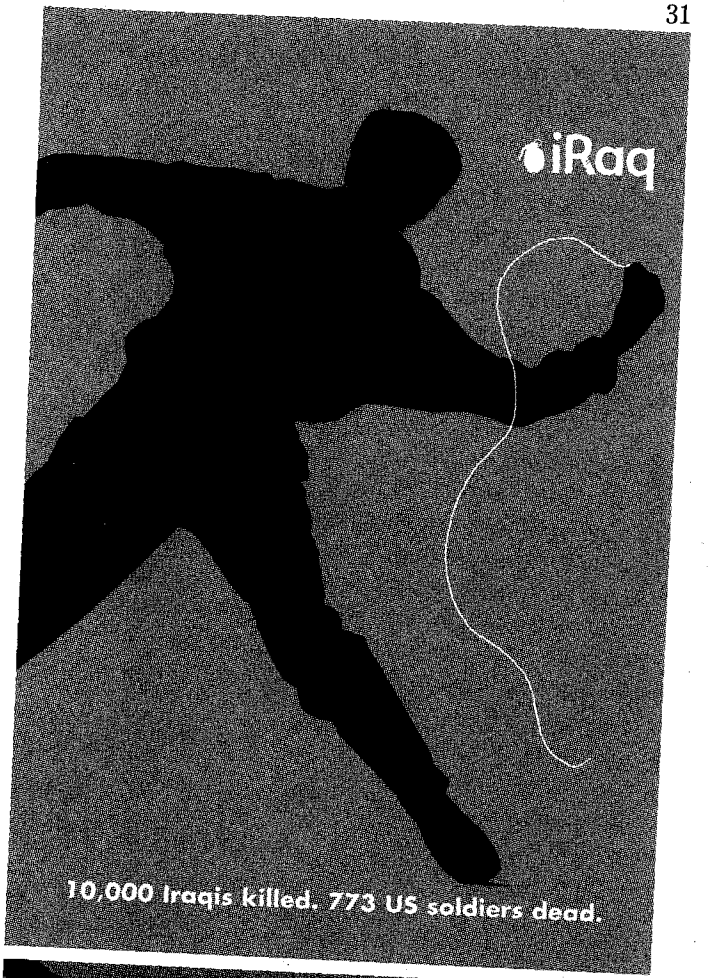

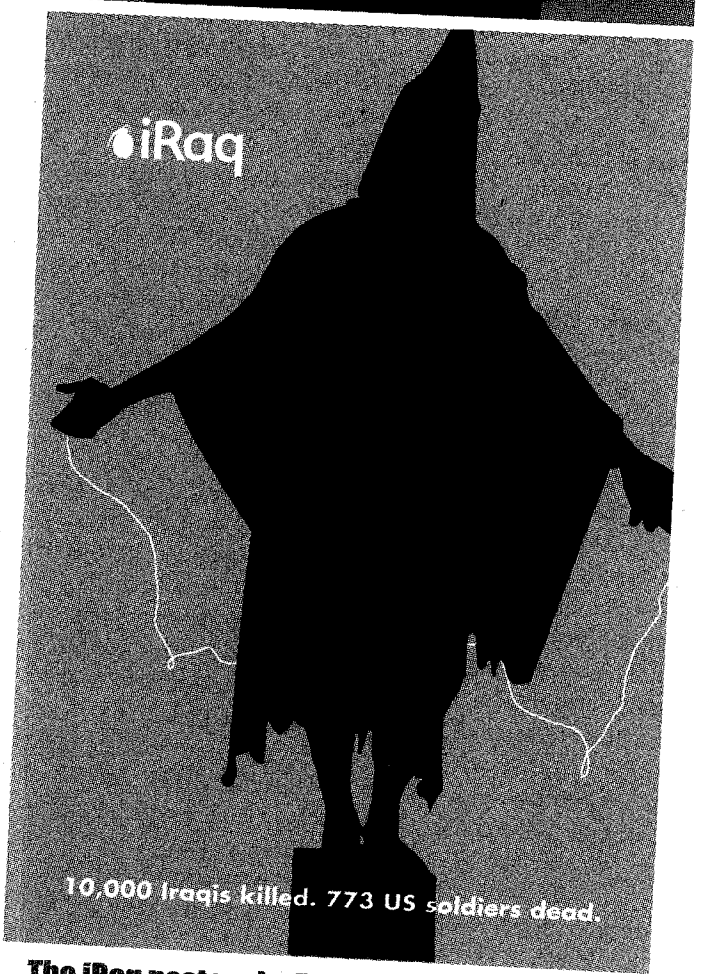

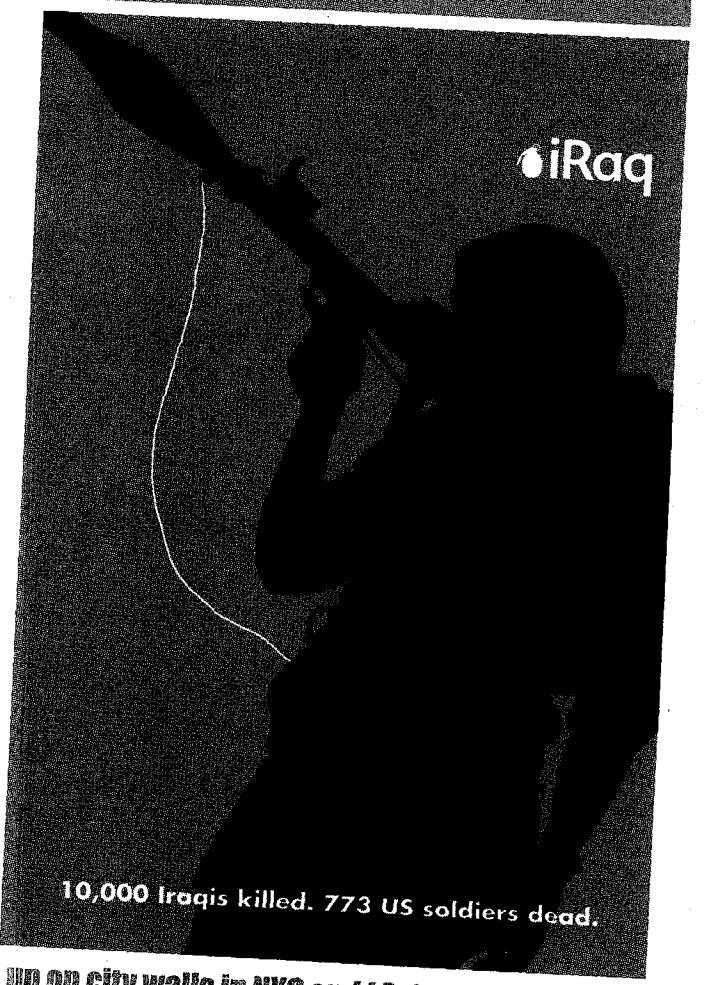

The iRaq posters by Forkscrew Graphics were slapped up on city walls in NYC and LA this past summer.

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over the past three years as she has toured her show *Rebel Without a Pause* across the nation. Speaking by phone from a rental car somewhere between Cincinnati and Columbus, as she was helping get-out-the-vote efforts in early October, she noted how spectators seem much more interested in the policy issues around which she weaves her barbed and cunning narratives. "For the first time in my career, I can go on a tirade for three, four, five minutes before I have to get back to just being funny," she said. "The whole point in this work is never to lose the audience. I can feel they're with me when I'm carrying on about international trade agreements."

As for impact, suffice it to say that the Bush Administration itself plainly fears the power of art. A year and a half ago Administration officials reportedly pressured the UN to drape a large blue curtain over the tapestry reproduction of Picasso's *Guernica*, which hangs along an entrance to the UN Security Council, lest Colin Powell have to make the case for war with bombed civilians writhing cubistically behind his head. Along with their objections to this or that Bush policy on war, the environment, healthcare and so on, artists have also taken to heart the Administration's contempt for free expression, and have been hellbent on getting their licks in before November 2. Sam Shepard, for instance, is rushing his new play, *God of Hell*—which he has called "a takeoff on Republican fascism"—toward an October 29 opening. Notes Boo Froebel, a co–executive producer of the Imagine Festival of Arts, Issues, and Ideas, which presented 200 events in seventy-five venues during the Republican National Convention in New York and which is now taking a festival of "Films to See Before You Vote" to Florida and Ohio, "People feel if they don't speak out now, they might never get a chance."

The do-it-yourself ethic of the new 'festivals of resistance' has dissolved the distinction between art and activism, medium and message.

That's certainly what Pittsburgh graphic designer Brett Yasko was thinking when he came up with the idea of Partisan Project, a poster campaign with designs by fifteen artists—among them, both prominent illustrators and underground wheatpasters. "I've never been a political person," says Yasko, 35. "But I was filled with frustration and anger at this Administration and understood that Pennsylvania could be the Florida of this election. I wanted to do something more than write a check." The initial print run of 150,000 has been distributed all over the state and beyond. (The posters can be ordered or downloaded at www.partisanproject.org.)

Posters, of course, like various performance traditions, have a long history in radical movements, as artists have historically organized themselves to speak out collectively on such issues as the Vietnam War, nuclear arms race, apartheid and AIDS. In each instance, they have had to shape their techniques to fit the times. Images like the famous, plaintive 1969 "And Babies?" poster, reacting to the My Lai massacre, and the glossy 1989 "Kissing Doesn't Kill: Greed and Indifference Do" bus ad, responding to AIDS, were powerful in their day. Yet, says art historian Jennifer Gonzalez, political artists must constantly assess "how to capture the eye of a person familiar with the public visual landscape." Some of today's most effective posters, like the iRaq series, at once appropriate and subvert the slick appeal of advertising. Others, like many featured in the touring exhibition "Yo! What Happened to Peace?" (www.33graphic.com/yo) and those gathered by the No RNC Poster Project (www.visualresistance.org), cultivate a more homemade look. Artist Melina Rodrigo, who drew Pinocchio Bush—the smirking President with an elongated proboscis, now ubiquitous at protest marches—says she produces handmade signs to satisfy people's desire for authenticity. "I think people like to feel an individual actually made something to express themselves for the cause," she says. "That counteracts so much of visual culture that is all about trying to sell you something."

The gesture also reflects one of the most significant developments in the aesthetics of protest over the past dozen years or so: the do-it-yourself ethic of such movements as Reclaim the Streets and Art and Revolution, which replaced the old march-and-rally format with "festivals of resistance," featuring giant puppets, outrageous costumes and an anti-authoritarian spirit, deliberately operating outside the realm of electoral politics. Rejecting the Old Left notion that artists basically supply the bunting on the platform where the politicos hold forth, they dissolve the distinction between being artists and activists, between the medium and the message. (Think of Bill Talen's creation, the Reverend Billy of the Church of Stop Shopping, who is as much an organizer of strategic interventions against corporate greed as he is a performer.)

Under the Bush onslaught, these artist-activists have had to rethink not only technique but also ideology, suggests Nato Thompson, an arts activist who now works as assistant curator at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, where he recently assembled a show of critical arts interventions into the public sphere. "This big, theatrical, self-organizing, creative protest movement developed in the 1990s, when the enemy was Clinton—NAFTA, welfare reform and so on. Now it's flagrant empire," he says. Four years ago, the Billionaires for Bush (or Gore) reminded spectators in a bouncy chant, "We don't care who you vote for. We already bought them!" This year, there's no parenthetical: The Billionaires are shilling only for Bush. The stakes are too high.

The upshot has been, at least for the moment, a tactical uniting of the various, often mutually suspicious, layers of the art world. At every level, the arts community has been stirred by the need to defeat Bush. This galvanizing goal has produced a momentum that won't be easy to stop—maybe not even in New Canaan. Froebel points out that the Imagine Festival is already getting requests from artists eager to know whether there will be another such festival next year. For his part, Brett Yasko is hatching a poster campaign for Pittsburgh's mayoral race next year—and for the race against Rick Santorum's re-election campaign in 2006. Melina Rodrigo notes that hundreds of engaged visual artists from all over the country are on a huge e-mail list for the first time and are staying in touch, sharing work and ideas, and she holds out hope that a Kerry victory would create an opening that could inspire even more activism. And, she adds wistfully, "It would give artists some new iconography." ■

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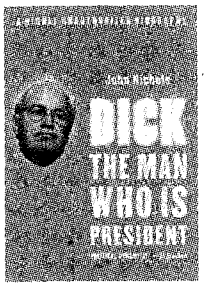

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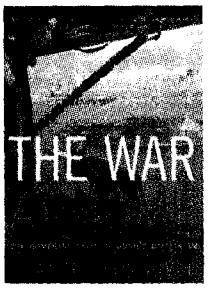

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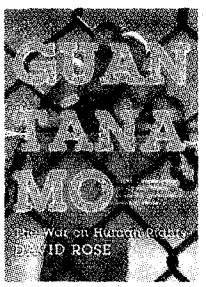

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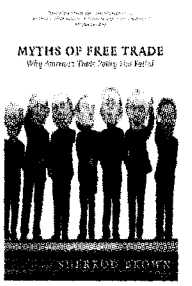

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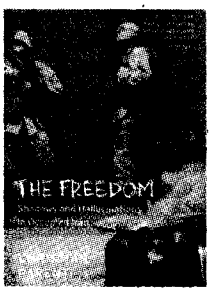

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In Fact . . .

FIVE-OH FOR THE *OBSERVER*

■ Given Texas's sorry luck to be the home of George W. Bush, Tom DeLay, Ken Lay et al., Northern liberals sometimes forget about the state's robust progressive tradition. One of the crown gems of that lustrous heritage is *The Texas Observer*, which turned fifty this year. Throughout its half-century run, the muckraking monthly has cut through the rhetorical fog, dug up the buried corruption and afflicted the powerful. From its coverage of the murder of an African-American teenager by East Texas night riders in the 1950s to the Sharpstown banking scandal that implicated state legislators in the 1970s to the Tulia drug sweep in 2001, the *Observer* has reported fearlessly. It has apprenticed a succession of gifted editors, including Ronnie Dugger, Willie Morris, Lawrence Goodwyn, Robert Sherrill, Molly Ivins, Jim Hightower, Lou Dubose and Nate Blakeslee. Currently upholding tradition are Jake Bernstein and Barbara Belejack. There'll be a big birthday bash in Austin, where the magazine is based, on December 4, with Bill Moyers and Willie Nelson presiding.

THE FLU STORY

■ If it weren't potentially fatal to thousands of Americans, the flu shot crisis would be a rich source of irony. The *usable* vaccine comes from the Pennsylvania plant of Aventis Pasteur—a French company! In the last debate Bush said, "We're working with Canada to...help us realize the vaccine necessary to make sure our citizens have got flu vaccinations this upcoming season." Funny. Didn't Bush explain in a previous debate that he blocked the import of Canadian drugs out of "safety" concerns?

NUCLEAR LOST AND FOUND

■ In its recent twice-annual report to the Security Council, the IAEA warned that satellite imagery and open surveillance information shows "widespread and apparently systematic dismantlement that has taken place at sites previously relevant to Iraq's nuclear program...in many instances the dismantlement of entire buildings that housed high precision equipment... formerly monitored and tagged with IAEA seals, as well as the removal of equipment and materials." IAEA inspectors were kicked out of Iraq in March 2003 at US behest and have not been welcome since. IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei said the missing dual-use machinery could be used in manufacturing bombs. As Charles Duelfer confirmed, Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons sites had been closed down and monitored by the IAEA since 1991. Under antiproliferation agreements the US and Iraq's interim government are obligated to inform the agency about missing equipment and material from former sites but haven't done so. It appears the US occupation allowed bomb-making equipment to be stolen and possibly fall into terrorists' hands.

NEWS OF THE WEAK IN REVIEW

■ The *Times*'s William Safire: "Members of Kerry's debate preparation team made Mary Cheney's private life the centerpiece of their answer to the question, especially worrisome to them, about same-sex marriage. Kerry was prepped to insert her sexuality into his rehearsed answer." Same day, same paper, page A14: "two officials who attended the debate preparations said they had not heard the subject of Ms. Cheney come up."

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

alert enough to divert UAL Flight 919 carrying The Artist Formerly Known as Cat Stevens, sending PeaceTrain's lyricist out of the country, to Bangor, Maine. NOEL E. PARMENTEL JR.

RUST, YES; RAGE, MAYBE

Galesburg, Ill.

■ Dale Maharidge's excellent "Rust and Rage in the Heartland" [Sept. 20] may overstate the link between downsized workers and reactionary, xenophobic nationalism. In my research among downsized factory workers here in Galesburg, I've spoken to Harley riders, gun enthusiasts, angry grannies, weight lifters, embittered alcoholics and even drug dealers, and I can't find anyone who thinks the invasion of Iraq makes sense or anyone who blames Mexicans for stealing their jobs (their Maytag refrigerator factory is relocating to Mexico).

These workers are generally quite patriotic: They fly the flag outside their homes, chant "USA! USA!" at rallies and mourn 9/11. But their anger is not typically "unfocused" and up for grabs—it is directed clearly and squarely at Maytag CEO Ralph Hake, corporate greed and politicians who support "free trade" and bust unions. And their nationalism is not xenophobic (something I've been looking for high and low); it's about keeping the American dream alive for their children and taking great pride in American manufacturing and craftsmanship. Though they think Mexican workers can't produce a Maytag refrigerator of the same quality, they uniformly recognize that corporations go to places like Mexico to exploit lower wages and laxer environmental and safety regulations.

These workers haven't tuned in to Limbaugh since they began losing their jobs, and they don't talk harshly about Muslims. They worked in a strong union shop and, consequently, understand their interests and the source of their problems—unlike the bigoted workers from Bridgeview to whom Maharidge refers. Maharidge correctly points our attention toward a potentially volatile combination of anger and fear among the working class, as growing anger about economic insecurity combines with fear of terrorism. But if the left is to focus that "flailing, unfocused, drifting" anger Maharidge has seen in the Rust Belt, we'll need a reinvigorated labor movement to raise (and focus) consciousness and unite workers around their common interests. I'm not worried about the focused anger that downsized workers in Galesburg express when they chant "USA! USA!" But I worry, like Maharidge, about the "unfocused" anger that comes from unorganized workers, fending for themselves in a time of fearmongering; what do *they* mean when they chant the same three letters? CHAD BROUGHTON

DEVIL'S DICTIONARY

New Haven, Conn.

■ During my years as a US Foreign Service officer, I relieved tension by writing topical verse. I've not outgrown the habit.

How soothing is the lexicon
of PR at the Pentagon!
"Acceptable casualties" expire
snug in the warmth of "friendly fire."
"Collateral damages" are kind—
they aim to leave no child behind.
What luck for them! Though mutilated,
those who survive are *liberated*!

WALTER WELLS

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Crude Awakening

MICHAEL T. KLARE

On January 9, 2004, Royal Dutch/Shell, one of the world's largest publicly traded oil companies, shocked the international financial community by announcing that it had overstated its oil and gas reserves by 20 percent, representing the equivalent of 3.9 billion barrels of petroleum—worth an estimated $136 billion at then current prices of about $35 per barrel. The announcement led to an immediate plunge in the value of Shell's stocks (shares of its two holding companies, Royal Dutch Petroleum Company of the Netherlands and Shell Transport and Trading Company of Britain, are traded separately) and the ouster of top corporate officials; it has also prompted an investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission and equivalent bodies in Holland and England. But far more significant than the financial and corporate repercussions of the reserve overstatement were its implications for the global energy equation: In contrast to oil company claims that petroleum is abundant and will remain so for a considerable time to come, it suddenly appeared that untapped supplies may prove more limited than was once assumed.

Scarcely had the global oil community absorbed the troubling news from Shell than it received yet another powerful shock: On February 24, the *New York Times* reported that top US energy analysts now believe that Saudi Arabia—the world's number-one producer—is facing the wholesale depletion of its major oilfields and may not be able to sustain its current output of 10 million barrels per day (mbd) much beyond the current decade. Were Saudi production to fall below 10 mbd for any length of time, the global energy system would simply collapse, as no other country can make up the difference on a sustained basis. But even if the Saudis do maintain this level, but fail to rise above it, the global economy will still suffer, since there is no way to satisfy rapidly growing world demand without a substantial increase in Saudi output. The US Department of Energy (DOE), for example, predicts that Saudi oil production will rise by 12.5 mbd between now and 2025, an increase of 125 percent, in order to meet anticipated world demand at the end of that period. Without this additional 12.5 mbd, there is no way the global oil industry will be able to satisfy anticipated requirements in the years ahead, and the entire world will face an acute energy crisis.

These two developments, coupled with news of declining or stagnant production in such established oil "provinces" as the United States, the North Sea, Indonesia, Nigeria and Venezuela, have directed fresh attention to claims that the world is approaching the moment of maximum or "peak" oil output, beyond which no amount of drilling or investment will result in higher levels of production.

The concept of "peak" oil derives from the pioneering research of M. King Hubbert, a prominent geophysicist who worked for many years at Shell Oil in Houston. In the early 1950s Hubbert determined that the oil output of any given field or reservoir typically follows a parabolic (bell) curve: at first, production rises very rapidly as the largest and most accessible stores of oil are developed; eventually, the rate of increase begins to decline as these stores are depleted and drilling commences on smaller, less accessible pockets; eventually, daily field output achieves its maximum attainable, or peak, level, and then begins an irreversible decline, moving ever closer to zero as all remaining supplies are exhausted. Hubbert further determined that peak production normally occurs when half of the reservoir's original petroleum inheritance has been extracted.

Michael T. Klare, professor of Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College and defense correspondent of The Nation, *is the author of* Resource Wars *and, most recently,* Blood and Oil: The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Petroleum Dependency *(Metropolitan).*

IN THIS ESSAY:

OUT OF GAS: The End of the Age of Oil.
By David Goodstein. Norton. 140 pp. $21.95.

OIL: Anatomy of an Industry.
By Matthew Yeomans. New Press. 246 pp. $22.95.

CRUDE: The Story of Oil.
By Sonia Shah. Seven Stories. 232 pp. $23.95.

THE END OF OIL.
By Paul Roberts. Houghton Mifflin. 389 pp. $26.

THE PARTY'S OVER: Oil, War, and the Fate of Industrial Societies.
By Richard Heinberg. New Society Publishers. 274 pp. Paper $17.95.

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This insight led to another: that the moment of peak output for a given field could be predicted in advance by estimating its net recoverable supply and using production history data to calculate when the half-way point in total extraction would be reached. Using this method, Hubbert predicted in 1956 that peak oil output in the United States (not including Alaska) would occur in or around 1970—a prediction that was met with widespread disbelief and derision at the time. But daily output in the Lower 48 did peak in 1970, and since then Hubbert's calculations have been viewed as extraordinarily prescient.

King Hubbert did not apply his methodology to the world as a whole—data on non-US supplies were too imprecise in the 1950s to make such calculations possible—but his followers in this country and abroad have used more recent and reliable information to plot the onset of global peak oil. Using estimates of recoverable world supplies of approximately 2 trillion barrels of conventional (i.e., liquid) petroleum, and estimated recovery-to-date tallies of about 900 billion barrels, these experts believe that global peak production—sometimes called "Hubbert's Peak"—will occur sometime during this decade. The intensive development of deep-offshore oil, polar supplies and "unconventional" sources (such as tar sands and shale oil) may extend the peak for another decade, they claim, but world oil production will eventually slacken and then turn relentlessly downward. (Readers who are interested in these calculations should consult *Hubbert's Peak* by Kenneth Deffeyes. Additional information is available at the website of the Association for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas, www.peakoil.net.)

If not already aware of all this, readers of *The Nation* should be on notice that both the imminence and the timing of peak oil matters—big time. Because petroleum supplies 40 percent of the world's energy—far more than any other source—and because oil powers most of the world's cars, trucks, buses, trains, planes and ships, a permanent decline in global output will have a powerful and lasting impact on the US and world economy. Unless affordable substitutes are developed, a decline in global oil output will produce rising transportation costs, diminished economic activity, high inflation and the onset of a deep and prolonged worldwide depression. Furthermore, because modern, mechanized agriculture is wholly dependent on cheap oil—for herbicides and pesticides, as well as truck and tractor fuel—a contraction of petroleum supplies will result in reduced food production and, in all likelihood, mass human starvation.

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The timing of peak oil matters because it bears on the crucial issue of how much time remains to us for the development of hydrogen fuel and other petroleum substitutes. All informed energy experts agree that peak oil production will occur at some point in this century, but the optimists among them believe that it will occur later, rather than sooner—thus affording us many years in which to develop the necessary alternatives. This, in essence, is the conclusion of the Bush Administration's energy strategy, as articulated in the National Energy Policy (May 17, 2001). Go ahead and consume more oil, the report seems to argue, reassuring us that America's scientists will devise a new energy system for our kids and grandchildren when that far-off moment of oil depletion arrives. The fact that the large oil companies that financed Bush's 2000 campaign will profit enormously from this advice is not, of course, something that is acknowledged in the report.

But what if peak oil arrives sooner rather than later, as predicted by Hubbert's followers? If this is the case, we are in for extreme trauma and difficulty. While it is conceivable that hydrogen will prove the fuel of choice in the second half of this century, it is unlikely that the required infrastructure—estimated to cost several trillion dollars—will be in place by 2015 or 2020, when global oil production may begin its irreversible descent. In that eventuality, we will have to undergo several decades of punishing scarcity until a new energy regime has been put in place. Worldwide economic activity will contract during this period, billions of people will starve or suffer, and the major industrial powers will engage in ceaseless "resource wars" over any remaining pools of petroleum.

If this scenario is even somewhat credible, American and international leaders should drop whatever else they are doing and devote their full attention to preparing the world for post-peak petroleum. This means, for example, imposing tough new restrictions on the minimum fuel economy of all new cars and SUVs (say 40 mpg, an entirely achievable standard), ceasing new highway construction, building high-speed rail lines and investing hundreds of billions of dollars in the development of renewable energy supplies and other alternatives to petroleum.

This also means, of course, discarding the Bush Administration's favored energy plan and adopting an entirely new strategy based on hydrogen and renewables. As well, it means forcing the big oil companies to invest in petroleum alternatives and persuading the big auto-makers to redesign their major production lines—costly steps that neither industry is eager to take. Hence, their evident reluctance to embrace the predictions of imminent peak production; rather, they have endorsed the more optimistic assessments of the DOE and other industry-friendly bodies indicating that the onset of peak oil is still many decades in the future.

It is against this backdrop that Shell's January 2004 announcement of overstated reserves and the subsequent indications of declining production in Saudi Arabia must be seen. Do these events signal that predictions of an imminent peak are accurate? No one can say for sure, but they do suggest that Hubbert's followers may be closer to the truth than the industry-backed optimists.

But this, needless to say, is contested territory, and is likely to remain so for some time. As evidence of the seriousness and significance of this struggle, the DOE hastily inserted a sidebar into its 2004 International Energy Outlook addressing the Shell and Saudi disclosures. Claiming that global reserves are substantial and will continue to grow as new technologies permit the exploitation of hitherto unaffordable or inaccessible supplies, the DOE blithely avowed that peak oil output will occur "closer to the middle than to the beginning of the 21st century."

The DOE projection, and those proffered by other industry-friendly agencies, rest on two critical assumptions: first, that immense reservoirs of as-yet-undiscovered oil lie beneath such insufficiently explored areas as the deep Atlantic, northern Siberia and Iraq's western deserts; and second, that higher energy prices will permit the profitable development of tar sands, shale oil and other unconventional sources. Although much of this remains speculative, the DOE sees no reason to hedge on its prediction that global oil production will rise from its present level of about 80 mbd (of which the United States consumes one-fourth) to an estimated 126 mbd in 2025. In other words, there is simply nothing to worry about.

Just how dangerous and delusional this assessment is likely to prove is the subject of five recent books on the future of petroleum: David Goodstein's *Out of Gas*, Richard Heinberg's *The Party's Over*, Paul Roberts's *The End of Oil* Sonia Shah's *Crude: The Story of Oil* and Matthew Yeomans's *Oil: Anatomy of an Industry*. These compelling and provocative books address disparate aspects of the larger problem, but all arrive at the same chilling conclusions:

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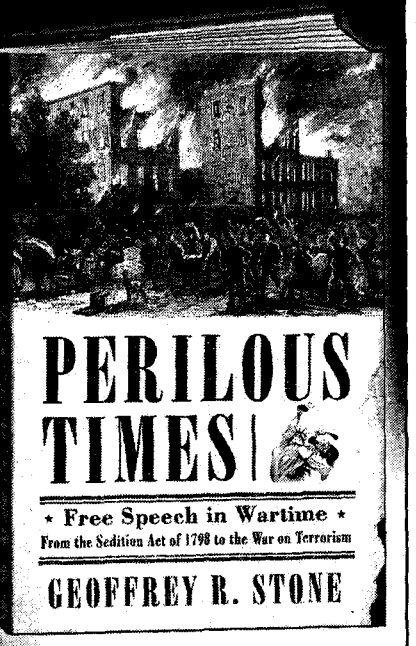

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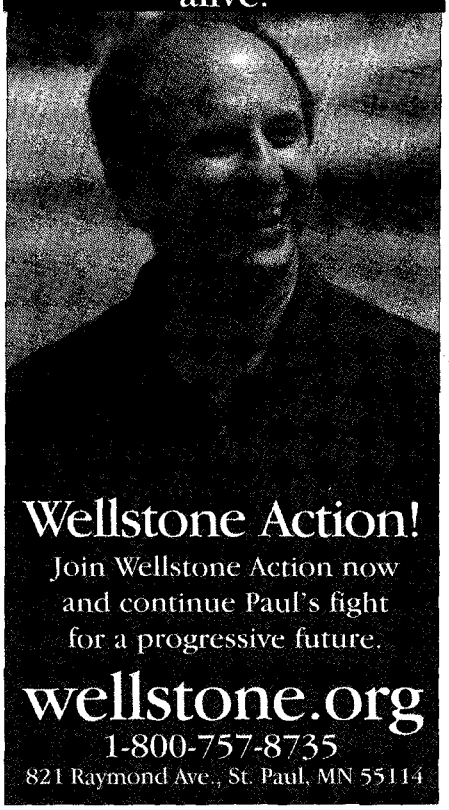

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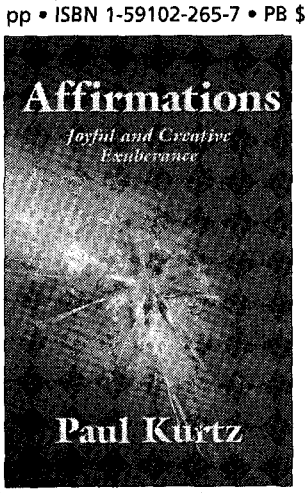

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§ Peak oil is already here, or will arrive soon—probably before the end of the current decade.

§ The production of deep-sea and Siberian oil and the development of unconventional sources of supply will prove too costly, too risky and too environmentally hazardous to provide a significant accretion to dwindling supplies of conventional oil.

§ Hydrogen and renewables may, at some point, prove viable alternatives to petroleum, but their development is proceeding far too slowly to substitute for disappearing oil during the next few decades. (Two of these authors, Goodstein and Heinberg, question whether these alternatives will ever prove an adequate substitute for petroleum.)

§ Continued reliance on petroleum and other fossil fuels (coal, natural gas) for the majority of our energy supply—90 percent, in the case of the United States—will intensify the buildup of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, thus hastening the onset of relentless droughts, heat waves, sea-level surges and other cataclysmic climate changes.

§ America's political leaders, like those of most other countries, are far too committed to the industrial status quo to provide the energetic and visionary leadership needed to commence the global transition to a post-petroleum economy. Moreover, the large US energy companies—which often exercise great influence over the nation's political leaders—are determined to prevent this transition for as long as they possibly can.

§ By not embarking immediately on a major program of conservation and change, we will sink deeper into dependency on oil and thus find ourselves increasingly vulnerable to the devastating consequences of post-peak energy scarcity. If we start now on the transition to hydrogen and other substitutes, we have a fighting chance of averting total economic collapse when oil begins to disappear; but the longer we wait, the greater the likelihood that the needed alternatives will not be ready in time, and so we (or our children) will be condemned to extreme deprivation.

In articulating these alarming and critical points, the authors of these books bring to bear a great deal of research and expertise. Drawing on his many years of experiences as a teaching scientist, Goodstein, a senior professor and vice provost of the California Institute of Technology, shows in plain, easy-to-understand language why our current reliance on petroleum and other fossil fuels cannot persist for more than another generation or two. Explaining that petroleum was formed over many millions of years under unique geological conditions that cannot be duplicated by human means, he avers that the most promising sources of oil have already been substantially depleted and that what remains will prove increasingly difficult to extract. "The followers of King Hubbert may or may not be correct in their quantitative predictions of when the peak will occur," he observes. But they have taught us a critical lesson: "The crisis will come not when we pump the last drop of oil but rather when the rate at which oil can be pumped out of the ground starts to diminish." And that critical point, he warns, "is much closer than we previously imagined."

Goodstein also evaluates the relative potential of other sources of energy, including coal, natural gas, hydrogen, solar, wind and nuclear. Each, he explains, has certain advantages and disadvantages; but none, at current levels of development, are capable of sustaining the energy-intensive life we have become accustomed to. Coal and natural gas are the most abundant and affordable, but both are nonrenewable fossil fuels and so, like oil, will eventually disappear; both, moreover, contain substantial carbon and so their use will contribute to the atmospheric buildup of greenhouse gases (unless some safe, inexpensive way is found to bury or "sequester" the unwanted carbon). Hydrogen offers great promise as an alternative source (or conveyor) of energy, but most of the existing supply is derived from natural gas, with all the problems that entails, and other plausible means of obtaining it (e.g., through electrolysis, using solar, wind or nuclear power) are too costly, undeveloped and problematic. We can make the transition to a post-petroleum economy, Goodstein suggests, but only if we move swiftly to "kick the fossil fuel habit" and develop environmentally friendly alternatives. This, in turn, "will require global political leadership that is both visionary and courageous"; unfortunately, "it seems unlikely that we will be so lucky."

Matthew Yeomans, a former columnist for *The Industry Standard*, comes to a similar conclusion but approaches it from a somewhat different perspective—by examining the evolution, present character and deep-seated pathologies of the global oil industry. Rather than exercise enlightened stewardship over a precious and finite resource, the oil companies have sought to maximize its exploitation for short-term profit—often trampling upon indigenous communities, fragile ecological areas and democratic systems in the process. "Environmental pollution, human rights abuses, political murder, and civil

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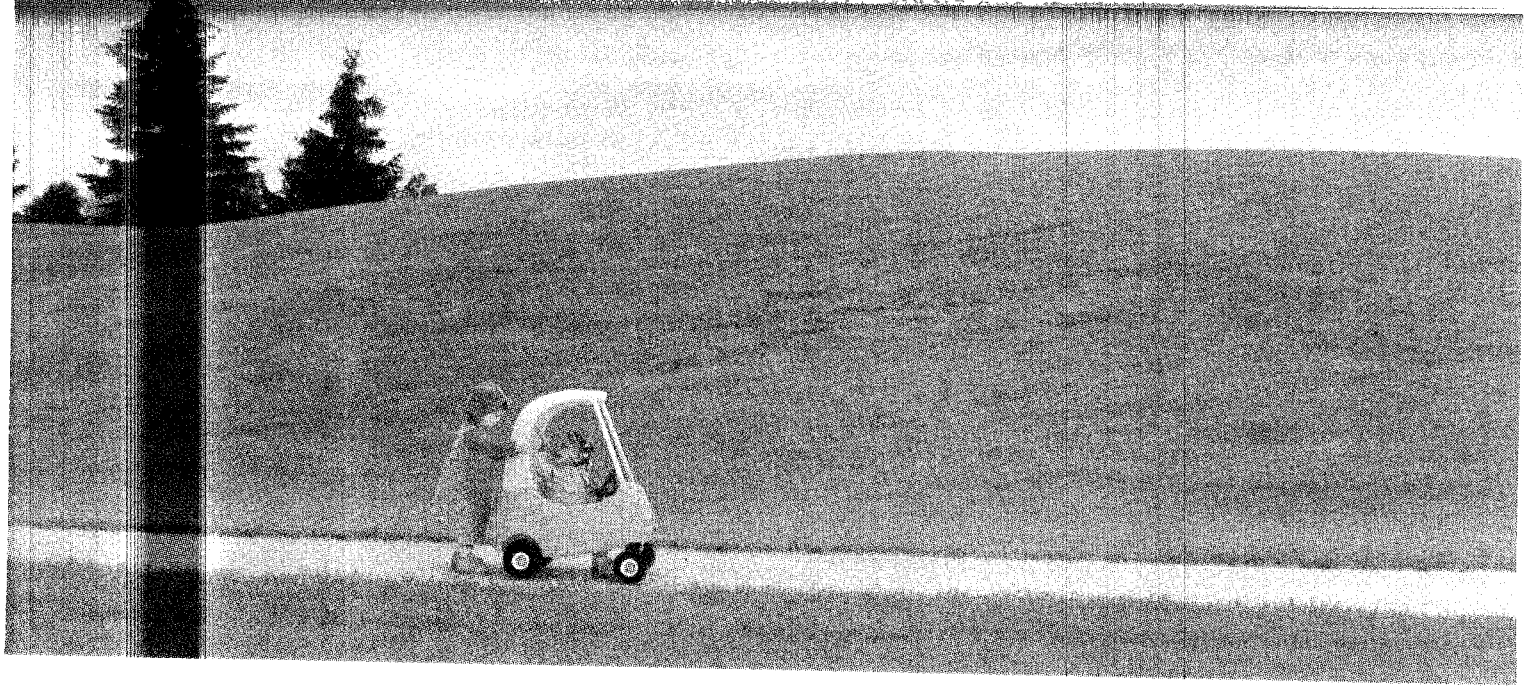

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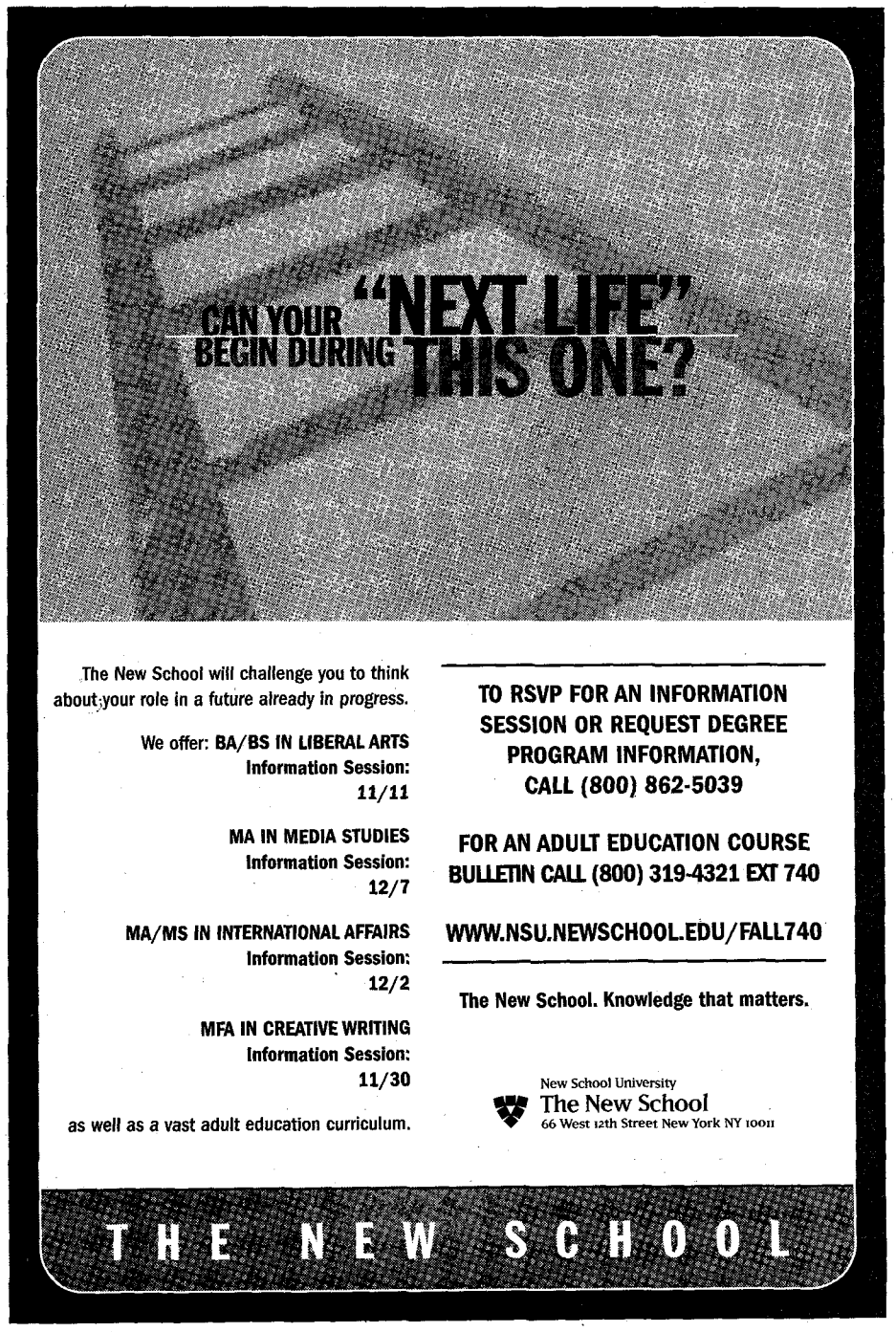
war—these are legacies of too many nations that possess oil," he asserts. Although less well versed in the science of energy than Goodstein, Yeomans shows how oil-company megalomania and greed have contributed to the exhaustion of existing reserves and hastened the onset of peak oil.

For Yeomans, it is the political rather than the economic and environmental consequences of depletion that are most worrisome. As petroleum becomes more scarce and valuable, powerful states will fight over its possession rather than cooperate in its conservation. "Oil addiction is America's Achilles' heel," he argues. "To remain dominant in the world, the U.S. must be sure that oil flows freely and consistently onto the global market." Accordingly, the Bush Administration "has made the protection of global oil supplies an equal partner with the war on terrorism in guiding U.S. foreign and defense policy." The invasion and occupation of Iraq, he claims, is but one expression of this overarching principle.

Sonia Shah, in *Crude*, extends this analysis, deftly showing how the oil companies' relentless pursuit of new fields to exploit has led them to drill for oil in some of the most impoverished and unstable areas of the world. Shah, an occasional contributor to *The Nation*, is particularly eloquent on the despoliation of the Delta region of southern Nigeria, where efforts by the minority Ogoni people to gain even a small fraction of the revenues derived from crude production in their environmentally ravaged homeland have been systematically and brutally repressed by military elites in the capital, who routinely seize the nation's vast oil wealth for their own private enrichment. "And so," she laments, "despite the billions of dollars worth of oil under their feet, the people of the Niger Delta lived in poverty and darkness."

Paul Roberts, a regular contributor to *Harper's Magazine*, combines the scientific analysis of Goodstein with the political acumen of Yeomans and Shah to provide a comprehensive and frightening assessment of our current energy dilemma. Once again, we are treated to an explanation of the depletion curve devised by King Hubbert and a review of the evidence for an imminent peak in production. But Roberts goes beyond this to examine the social, economic and environmental consequences of our dependency on petroleum and to identify the powerful obstacles to radical change. Petroleum has proved to be such a cheap and versatile source of energy that we have constructed our entire civilization around its unrestrained consumption, he argues; hence, we perceive few incentives for abandoning oil in favor of more costly and inconvenient fuels. Practical alternatives do exist, but we will not embrace them so long as the existing political-economic system retains its deep-seated addiction to cheap oil.

More than the other authors, Roberts examines the relative utility of alternative energy paths, ranging from natural gas and hydrogen to the renewables like wind and solar. None of these paths, he argues, currently offer a blanket, truly affordable substitute for petroleum. Hydrogen may, in time, provide such an option, but not without a lot more research, experimentation and investment. In the meantime, we need to adopt a "bridging" strategy based on the increased use of natural gas, enhanced conservation and fuel efficiency, greater reliance on wind and solar power, and the gradual introduction of hydrogen-powered devices. But, like the other authors, Roberts worries that time is running out. "Each year that we fail to commit to serious energy research and development or fail to begin slowing the growth of energy demand through fuel efficiency... is another year in which our already unstable energy economy moves so much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closer to the point of no return."

Of all these authors, Richard Heinberg is the most pessimistic about our capacity to take the necessary steps in time. A professor at the New College of California in Santa Rosa, he argues that the rapid development and exploitation of petroleum has created a bubble economy that is sure to burst once the moment of peak production has passed—a moment, he believes, that is soon upon us. "Industrial societies have been flourishing for roughly 150 years now, using fossil energy resources to build far-flung trade empires, to fuel the invention of spectacular new technologies, and to fund a way of life that is opulent and fast-paced. It is as if part of the human race has been given a sudden windfall of wealth and decided to spend that wealth by throwing an extravagant party." But all too soon, "the party itself will be a fading memory—not because anyone decided to heed the voice of moderation, but because the wine and food are gone and the harsh light of morning has come."

Unlike Roberts, Heinberg has little faith that the development of hydrogen, natural gas and other "bridging" technologies can spare us from a painful economic contraction. All these approaches, he suggests, depend on the perpetuation of a high-cost, energy-intensive industrial leviathan that will not survive the disappearance of cheap oil. What is needed, he insists, is not so much technological innovation as profound life-style adjustments, obliging us to use less energy, consume fewer industrial goods, grow more of our own food and rely on locally based, renewable energy sources. This will not be an ongoing "party" of the sort that most Americans now enjoy, but it will provide some attractions of its own—particularly in terms of greater community sharing and participation.

Together, these five books make a persuasive argument that the era of cheap and abundant petroleum is fast drawing to a close and that we are entering a new period of growing scarcity, high prices and economic trauma. They also demonstrate, with unshakable logic, that the longer we put off the transition to a post-petroleum energy system, the worse off we'll be. They should be required reading for all who care about the future of this country and the planet as a whole.

Unfortunately, it does not appear that our leaders are prepared to accept this new reality. Rather, they prefer to shield themselves—and the rest of us—from the wrenching adjustments that will inevitably be required. For some officials, of course, these adjustments will prove detrimental to the profit intake of their friends and associates in the oil business, and so they eschew any changes in the status quo; others are simply worried about the political risks of speaking the truth to the American public, and so advocate only the most timid sorts of initiatives. (At the risk of oversimplification, one can say that the Bush camp falls into the first category, the Kerry camp into the second.) But inaction will only bring us closer to catastrophe, and timid steps will not immunize us from the dangers ahead. As these books make so painfully clear, we must liberate ourselves from our addiction to cheap petroleum and begin the transition to a sane and sustainable alternative. ■

Because We Could

ANDREW COCKBURN

When George H.W. Bush invaded Panama back in 1989 (no threat to the United States, its leader a longtime CIA asset, thousands of civilian casualties: ring a bell?), Administration flacks dubbed the exercise Operation Just Cause. However, irreverent Pentagon apparatchiks assigned to plan the invasion mulled the lack of any rational justification for the attack and took to calling it Operation Just Because.

Iraq got lumbered with Operation Iraqi Freedom, which for Iraqis has turned out to mean freedom to have your head chopped off on TV, be blown to bits by "precisely targeted" American bombs and tank shells, "abused" with electrodes attached to your genitals, never stirring outdoors (if female) without an all-encompassing veil, or staying at home and sitting in the dark because there's no electricity. Since there is no conceivable justification for inflicting these miseries, we might as well tell them it's Just Because.

At least by this date we should not have to trouble ourselves with the possibility that Saddam posed a threat to anyone either with WMDs or links to Osama—save that even today, deep in the recesses of the terrorology business, the fantasies that once charmed the nation's journalists survive undiminished. Yossef Bodansky, the director of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, has them all: secret shipments of Iraqi WMDs to Syria before the war, secret Iraqi-Iranian-Syrian plans to invade Israel, secret Iranian and Syrian long-range missiles in Lebanon (complete with detailed descriptions of their calibers and range), not to mention a secret and especially fiendish Syrian plot to contaminate Israel's water resources.

This torrent of drivel flows remorselessly through more than 500 pages. Sinister Arab plots, such as an Egyptian plan to invade Israel, loom as specters, only to disappear from the story as Bodansky scurries on breathlessly to newer and taller tales, usually garnished with attribution to one or another intelligence agency. Hence verbatim quotations from GRU (Russian military intelligence) reports march impressively through his narrative of the actual war. A quick Google check reveals these as lifted from a notorious wartime website touting GRU connections replete with wholly fictional reports of developments in the fighting. "Iraqwar.ru" was subsequently revealed as the concoction, according to one authoritative Russian military commentator, of "some guys kicked out of the [Russian] secret services for incompetence."

However, while consigning Bodansky's *Secret History of the Iraq War* to the UFO-

Andrew Cockburn, a veteran Middle East correspondent, is the author, with Patrick Cockburn, of Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein *(HarperCollins).*

BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ESSAY:

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE IRAQ WAR.
By Yossef Bodansky.
HarperCollins. 570 pp. $27.95.

THE IRAQ WAR.
By John Keegan.
Knopf. 254 pp. $24.95.

THE FALL OF BAGHDAD.
By Jon Lee Anderson.
Penguin. 389 pp. $24.95.

THE FREEDOM: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq.
By Christian Parenti.
New Press. 211 pp. $21.95.

WHAT WE OWE IRAQ: War and the Ethics of Nation Building.
By Noah Feldman.
Princeton. 154 pp. $19.95.

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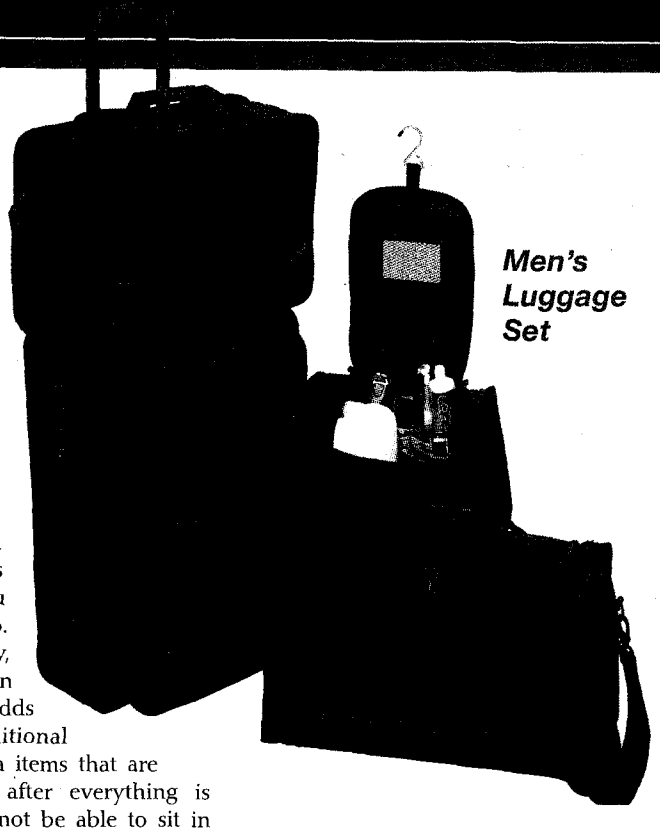

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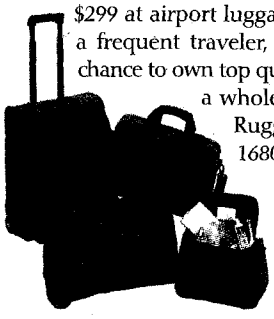

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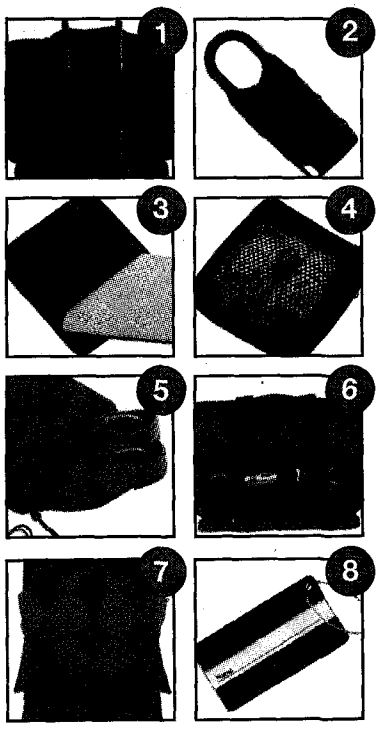

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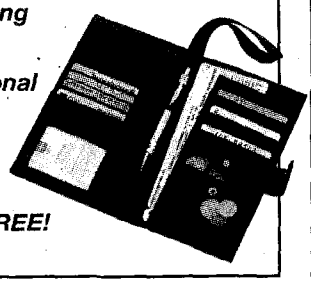

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abduction shelf, it is worth remembering that, not so long ago, most of the nation's national security intelligentsia were peddling material almost as self-evidently worthless. Brookings Institution experts, for example, endorsed the invasion of Iraq on the grounds that Saddam's nuclear weapons program posed a significant threat to the national security of the United States. These weighty conclusions turned out to be based on the word of Khidhir Hamza, self-styled as "Saddam's Bombmaker," the bulk of whose testimony was quite clearly fraudulent long before the war, and definitively exposed once the invasion troops found Saddam's nuclear cupboard to be entirely bare.

The Brookings savants have long since backpedaled from their martial stance, but other highly respectable authorities are still loath to abandon last year's self-evident truths. Concluding his slightly superficial narrative of the war and its background, John Keegan wistfully raises the possibility that there may be some WMDs in Iraq after all, quoting some CYA hedging on the topic by weapons sleuth David Kay, along with Kay's Bodansky-esque proposition that Saddam may have shipped weapons to Syria.

While Keegan's book is all dressed up in the traditional trappings of a broad-sweep military history—he even includes the "order of battle" of the little British fleet in the Arabian Gulf; so nostalgic, these Brits!—Jon Lee Anderson's account of the conflict (which draws on his reports for *The New Yorker*) amounts to less of a sweep and more of the toothbrush treatment, taking us down the narrow path of his personal experiences in Baghdad during the period immediately before, during and after the 2003 invasion. Anderson has much of interest to tell, but large parts of the narrative reminded me of a little *jeu d'esprit* once published by John Lennon consisting of a pocket diary filled in for every workday of the year with the words "Got up. Went to work. Came home. Watched telly. Went to bed." Thus we learn a lot about Anderson's daily life in Baghdad and relations with his driver, information ministry drivers and fellow members of the foreign press corps, as well as the restaurants he ate in, the barber he patronized and so on. Buried in the earnest verbiage is a great deal of arresting material, ranging from the intriguing report that Ronald Reagan sent Saddam a pair of spurs as a present in 1986, to rich descriptions of visits to the war cemeteries left behind by the British, not to mention Anderson's relationship with the morally dubious figure of Ala Bashir, an artist-surgeon who enjoyed Saddam's confidence and esteem before passing effortlessly to the embrace of the CIA.

Unfortunately, the tone mandated by the flat-footed *New Yorker* style drains his story of any emotional connection to events unfolding in the narrative. Sometimes the scenes speak for themselves, as when he encounters child victims of American bombing, but all too often his prose leaves the extraordinary drama of those days in a waterlogged state. For example, in recording the killing by a US tank unit of two TV journalists in the Palestine Hotel, Anderson says, "Most of the reporters I spoke to believed it had been an Iraqi attack and worried what it might mean for our safety." This is odd, since every other account of the incident I have heard makes it clear that the US tank that fired was clearly visible on the nearby Jumhuriyah bridge. In a parenthetical paragraph, Anderson concedes, "I was wrong" and correctly attributes the shelling to the US tank, adding, however, that "the Americans thought they were receiving sniper fire from the hotel.... No one in the Palestine believed this to be true." Yes, but what do *you* think, Jon Lee?

One of the few characters for whom Anderson has a harsh or even emotional word is the veteran British correspondent Robert Fisk—"fidgety, taciturn...with a blotchy red face." I have the feeling that at some point in some war-zone hotel lobby Anderson may have been on the receiving end of an acerbic Fisk commentary regarding American media complicity with US Middle East policy. Certainly his epithets appear to have been selected with some care, guaranteed to alert a politically correct US readership about Fisk: "Saddam's people positively adored him...ardent Arabist...wildly popular throughout the Muslim world." As I.F. Stone once remarked of Theodore White, a man who writes like that need never lunch alone—at least not in New York.

Christian Parenti's briefer but brilliantly vivid take on Iraq since the war is welcome relief indeed. *Nation* readers have already had the benefit of most of his incisive dispatches from the front, but for those who have been subsisting on more dreary fare, *The Freedom* should provide a refreshing, robust corrective. Judging by my own limited experiences of occupied Iraq, he gets it absolutely right, including the surreal mismatch between the air-conditioned Green Zone enclave housing the occupation headquarters/US Embassy, whose "real function...seems to be the in-

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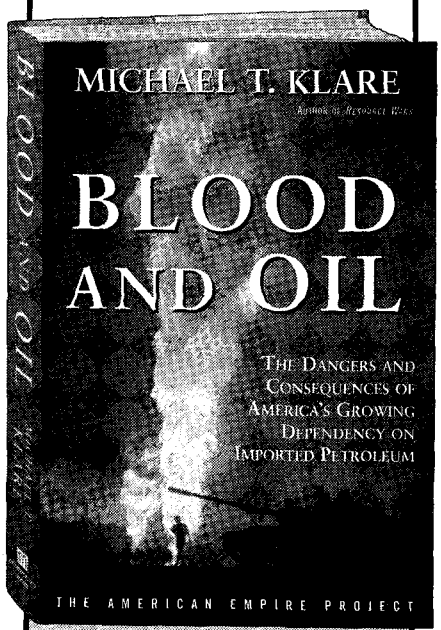
—David Goodstein, author of *Out of Gas*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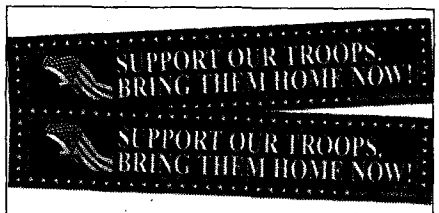

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tentional mismanagement of reconstruction contracts," and the hot, stinking, dangerous and exciting real world inhabited by Iraqis beyond the fortifications. He is especially good on the "stretched thin, lied to, and mistreated" cannon fodder of the occupation army, who despise what they call the "occupodians" inside the Green Zone. Parenti gets his title from an encounter in a Ramadi children's hospital, which, despite the billions appropriated for Iraqi reconstruction, had exhausted a meager grant from the Coalition Provisional Authority and had no money left for medical supplies. Aid agencies had provided only cookies. A nervous hospital director dodges a question on whether he sees many child patients with symptoms of radiation sickness because of American use of depleted-uranium ammunition. Pressed for a direct answer, "Dr. Hussein's tough composure softens and he offers something of a coded apology: 'This is the freedom.'" Quite so.

My only quibble with the book concerns a passage where Parenti delves into wonkery and suggests that the war was about "positioning US military might as the sole security arbiter upon which all advanced economies are dependent.... Securing the Middle East and its oil reserves would give America important political leverage over the EU and East Asia." I'm always dubious of the notion that nations act for reasons of "foreign policy." History indicates that almost any government's international actions are usually motivated by exigencies of domestic politics and/or squalid personal greed. Thus Parenti's succinct description of the care and feeding of the Halliburton Corporation, which receives $1 billion a month for work in Iraq (hardly any of which benefits Iraqis) and meanwhile pays $13,000 a month to former Halliburton CEO Dick Cheney, goes a long way toward explaining why we went into Iraq. Without the Iraq contracts, Halliburton would probably be bankrupt because Cheney, as CEO, bought Dresser Industries without noticing that Dresser had billions in asbestos liabilities (whoever said this guy was smart?).

At least Parenti does not insult our intelligence by asserting that we were manipulated into invading Iraq because a bunch of devious neocons, including Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, cherished a utopian vision of imposing democracy in the Middle East—a ludicrous notion predictably popular among the punditocracy. John Keegan takes the idea at face value, although he does think it a little odd that the neocons, while eager to transport democracy, simultaneously "supported extremist politicians in Israel" who didn't seem too interested in a fair deal for Palestinians.

Actually, the record indicates that the neocons were hardly more interested in a fair deal for the Iraqis than their chums in Jerusalem are for *their* conquered subjects. This becomes very clear from Noah Feldman's valuable little treatise *What We Owe Iraq*, which lays out clearly just how we avoided delivering whatever we owed Iraq in the way of democracy.

A law professor and scholar of Islamic thought hired as a constitutional adviser to the occupation government, Feldman noted with alarm on his first flight into Baghdad that his fellow passengers, like him recruited to advise and guide the occupation, all had their noses buried in books about the US occupations of Japan and Germany. "Not one seemed to need a refresher on Iraq or the Gulf Region," he writes.

An honorable exception to the general run of occupodians, Feldman thinks it is actually in our own interests to foster a legitimate democratic government in Iraq in order to combat terrorism effectively, as well as being the right thing to do. Thus, interspersed with some deeper notes on the theory and practice of nation-building are his pithy reminiscences about his tour of duty in what had once been Saddam's Republican Palace, now transformed into the seat of colonial rule.

When Feldman first arrived, the largest conference room in use still had a Koranic verse inscribed across one wall: "Consult the people regarding the matter," it advised, "and when you have reached a decision, then put your trust in God." Generally considered as a Koranic endorsement of democratic institutions, the verse rapidly disappeared after occupation viceroy Paul Bremer arrived and began using the room for his fantasy-laden press conferences. "Elections," explains Feldman, "were off the table." Instead, the United States instituted a "Governing Council" that was granted neither power nor respect by the colonial power (I remember council members complaining of being punched by US military guards when arriving for meetings with Bremer). Whereas Feldman doesn't have much good to say about his employers, he has a hero in the form of Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who repeatedly challenged the Americans to live up to their rhetoric—"if this is to be a democracy, where are the elections?"—and refused to endorse the various excuses and shabby substitutes offered by Bremer.

On paper at least, Sistani has got his way. Elections are due to take place in January

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2005, offering a faint hope that Iraq, if endowed with a legitimate government, will arrest its decline into a Hobbesian state of nature. Presumably that is what Washington wants too; at least that is what we are led to believe. Yet I have my doubts, especially as the so-called "government" of interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi is doing its best behind the scenes to put off the elections yet again, while the US occupation army seems to be working hard to escalate the level of violence and chaos in the country.

An Iraq splintered into fragments and powerless for the foreseeable future might be considered good for, well, quite a lot of people. Israel has always been nervous about Iraq's potential as a rich, educated, nationalistic regional power. The oil companies, which have never cared for Iraq's forty-year tradition of prickly independence in oil matters, cannot be too displeased that present conditions are helping to maintain prices at profitable heights. Shocking though it may be to suggest that reducing Iraq to its present state was the ultimate object of the exercise, one has to accept that US policy-makers have done everything in their power to bring it about. Feldman reminds us that the looting during the first month of the occupation "led to the disappearance of the apparatus of the government" as well as the collapse of the basic services on which Iraq as a modern society depended, followed by the imposition of Ambassador Bremer's authoritarian rule. Interestingly, in describing the immediate aftermath of Saddam's fall, Jon Lee Anderson notes matter-of-factly that initially the looting was entirely confined to east Baghdad, because the Americans stationed tanks on the Tigris bridges and thus prevented the mayhem from crossing to west Baghdad. Then, two days later, as he records, those tanks were withdrawn and west Baghdad was plundered too.

Mission accomplished? ■

MUSIC

Guided by Voices

JODY ROSEN

TOM WAITS • BJÖRK

The new Tom Waits album begins, in very Waitsian fashion, with a racket: a squall of percussive noise that sounds like it was recorded in a freight elevator. During the first decade of his career, Waits established a unique persona and a maudlin sound—he was a singing Bukowski, a barfly balladeer who croaked romantic songs about skid-row characters, accompanied by piano and strings—but starting with *Swordfishtrombones* (1983), the Beat poet became a poet of the beat, pop's supreme rhythm freak. He's filled his records with junkyard percussion and close-miked drums whose sound distorts into a muffled boom. He has pushed lurching, old-time musical machines (pump organ, calliope) to the foreground, reveled in the noise of oddball instruments and found sounds (Swiss bells, glass harmonica, "Indonesian seed pod") and hired musicians like Marc Ribot, who plays his guitar a bit like a drum—anything to make his songs clatter like a jalopy navigating an unpaved road.

Real Gone, Waits's nineteenth studio album, brings a new kind of thump. It's there in that album opener, "Top of the Hill," alongside a deejay's turntable scratches and dissonant flashes of electric guitar: a pummeling sound that might easily be mistaken for a computer-generated drumbeat but is in fact the voice of Tom Waits, who borrowed a trick from hip-hop—human beatboxing—and created many of *Real Gone*'s rhythm tracks by huffing into a hand-held tape recorder. Waits has long used his voice, one of the most expressive and unlovely instruments in pop, to channel a rogues' gallery of characters. On the new album, Waits sings both the drunkard's lament and the sound of his drunken stagger. A voice as loud and leathery as any drum has taken its rightful place in the rhythm orchestra.

Waits's beatboxing, and the absence of his trademark piano, bring a whiff of novelty to *Real Gone*. But the album could hardly be called a departure. Waits is still writing taut little poems about love and death and setting them to tunes that distill Kurt Weill, parlor ballads, circus music, rural blues, urban funk, snatches of Afro-Cuban rhythm and other seemingly incompatible source materials. Unlike many veteran performers, who shuffle record producers and hop between trendy styles in an effort to keep up with the zeitgeist, Waits long ago left the world behind; his post-*Swordfishtrombones* output has been impressively focused, the work of an artist burrowing deeper into his eccentricities. Despite minor shifts in tone and texture, it's fair to say that Waits has been making the same album for the past twenty-two years.

Of course, no one but Waits has been making that album; he's a genre unto himself. Who besides Waits could dream up "Metropolitan Glide," which slows a James Brown groove to a sinister creep, adds some raggedy guitar picking and serves up a string of Bizarro World dance-floor instructions: "Turn off the sound on your cellular phone/Whip the air like a Rainbow Trout...Show your teeth bray like a calf"? That song, like most on *Real Gone*, is swamped in noise: feedback, overloaded microphones, fuzzy guitars. It's a sound as thick and lumpy as a bowl of goulash, and listening to it you realize how accustomed your ears have become to the crispness of digital-age pop; of all Waits's perversions, none are more refreshing than his devotion to sonic muck. The mambo-blues song "Shake It" takes the approach to an extreme, setting Waits's lead vocal against Ribot's lead guitar and gradually ratcheting up the distortion on both, until it's nearly impossible to tell one from the other.

If Waits's music makes a virtue of clutter, his lyrics have an almost classical tidiness. (He's one of the few rock songwriters whose words read well on the printed page.) On *Real Gone*, the songs are bleak and blood-soaked; Waits may be reacting to world events—the album includes at least one explicit antiwar number, "Day After Tomorrow"—but as always, his songs seem to float outside time, pieced together from old books, old movies and other scraps of cultural memory. In recent years Waits has gone rustic, leaving behind the diners and dive bars of his early albums to lay his songs in stark rural settings. Most of the songs on *Real Gone* take place in a kind of Gothic Upper Midwest, a landscape of cornfields,

Jody Rosen, a writer in New York and the author of White Christmas: The Story of an American Song *(Scribner), is currently at work on a book about Benjamin Franklin and the glass harmonica.*

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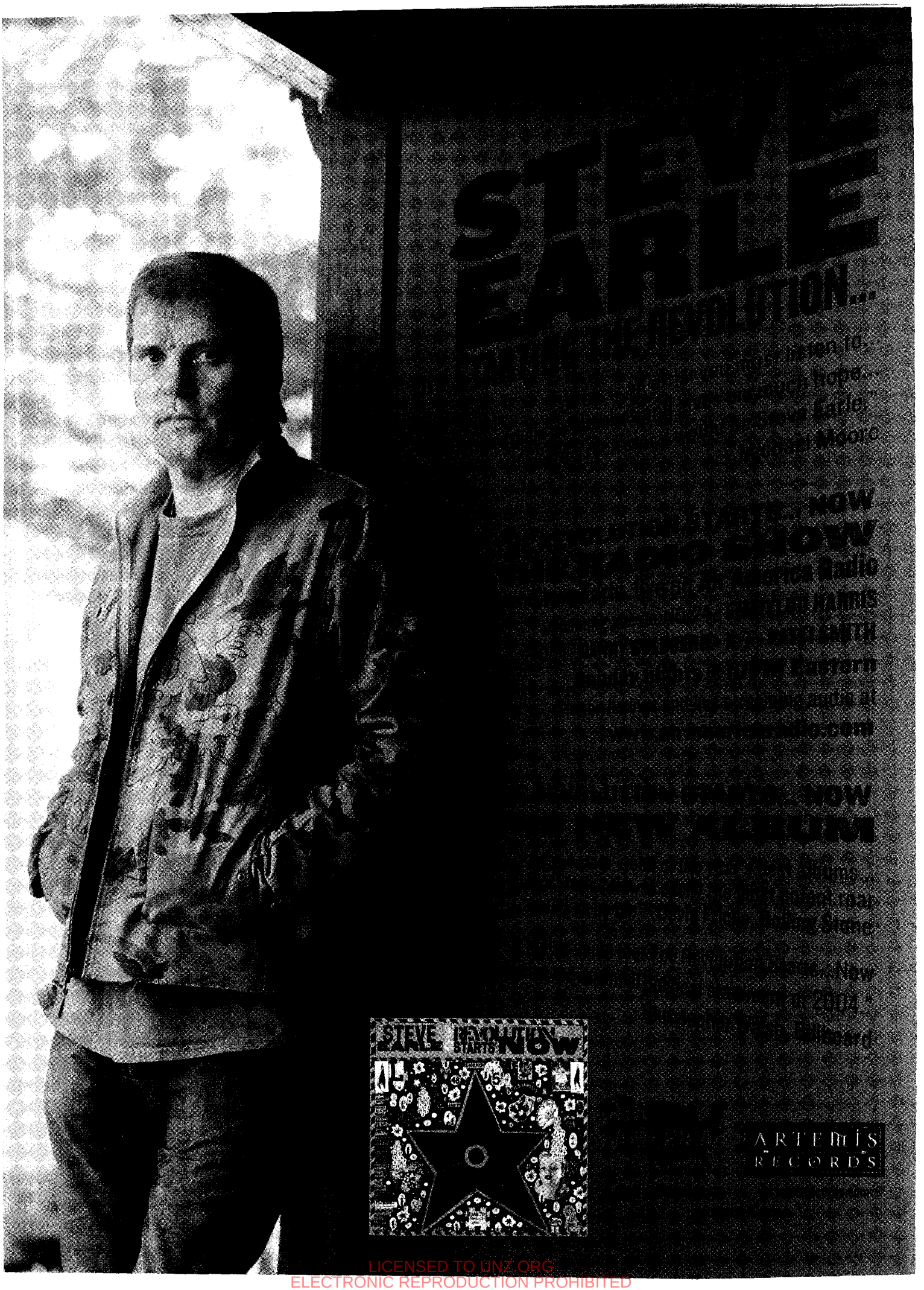

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slate-gray skies and violence. In "How's It Gonna End" Waits sings:

> The barn leaned over
> The vultures dried their wings
> The moon climbed up an empty sky
> The sun sank down behind the tree on the hill
> There's a killer and he's coming
> Thru the rye

Not just anyone could get away with lines like these. Waits's voice, which even at its most dulcet sounds like a revving lawnmower engine, is his secret weapon: It allows him to sing things that would sound corny coming from anyone else. And yet, while his art depends utterly on his singing, it's his singing—the shamelessly overwrought manner in which he tries on the voices of hobos, old salts, carnival barkers, madmen—that gives a listener pause. Several years ago, a friend walked out midway through a screening of Waits's 1988 concert film, *Big Time*. He'd been repelled by Waits's bug-eyed stage antics and by a voice that seemed to grow more cartoonish with every song. "It seemed almost like minstrelsy," my friend said.

He wasn't wrong. Waits is filed in the rock bin at your local record store, but his soul belongs to the musical theater—not the tradition of Sondheim or even Brecht and Weill but that of Joe Weber and Lew Fields: the primitive and unruly turn-of-the-century vaudeville stage, with its ethnic dialect singers, blackface comedians and sentimental balladeers bellowing Tin Pan Alley tunes to the cheap seats. Today, we are uncomfortable with this colorful, complicated, vulgar part of our musical heritage, but it remains one of the seedbeds of American song, and Waits draws on it avidly, embracing vaudeville-style coarseness and artifice in a musical age obsessed with authenticity. Listen to virtually any rock singer, and you'll hear variations on a single persona: sensitive rocker, sexy rocker, gruff rocker. On *Real Gone*, Waits roars like a pirate in one song and slurs his words like a drunk in the next; he sings in the voices of a 21-year-old soldier, a circus performer, a cuckold, an escaped convict and a dead man. It's postmodern minstrelsy of a very high order.

But the roots of Waits's music stretch deeper into the past. His wife, co-producer and frequent collaborator, Kathleen Brennan, has described her husband's two songwriting modes as "Grim Reapers and grand weepers," themes that link Waits's work not only to that perennial rock-and-roll wellspring, the blues, but to some of the earliest American pop songs: to death-haunted Victorian ballads, with their tragic loves and waltz-time melodies, and further back, to nostalgia-soaked antebellum parlor songs. We can hear echoes of those ancient songs on *Real Gone*: in the spooky "Green Grass," sung by a ghost to the lover at his graveside ("There's a bubble of me/And it's floating in thee"); in "Sins of my Father," with its pastoral scenes and dream of "Jenny with the light brown hair." Forget punk revivalists, with their haircuts and snarling three-chord songs straight out of 1977; forget Lenny Kravitz, with his flared pants and vintage tube amplifiers. Tom Waits is keeping Stephen Foster's nineteenth century alive in twenty-first-century pop. Now *that's* a retro-rocker.

Waits has an unlikely spiritual cousin in Björk, the little Icelandic sprinkler of musical fairy dust whose new album was released a few weeks back. Like Waits, Björk is a pop singer-composer-producer with a tenacious avant-garde streak; like Waits, she's a romantic, a creator of her own beautiful and idiosyncratic grand weepers. And now, in the same season that has brought us Waits's debut as a vocal percussionist, Björk has delivered *Medúlla*, on which she's abandoned instruments almost entirely, gathered a motley group of vocalists—hip-hop beatboxers; rock singers of various stripes; an Inuit throat singer; a "human trombonist"; and two choirs—and paid extravagant tribute to the power of the human voice.

Medúlla is not exactly unprecedented. From barbershop quartets to gospel close-harmony groups to doo-wop to the kooky a cappella experiments of Todd Rundgren to Bobby McFerrin's novelty hits, vocals-only pop music has a long history. But the scale and ambition of *Medúlla* is something different—"Don't Worry, Be Happy" it ain't. Björk has continually shoved at the edges of pop song form, embracing the skittering beats and digital white noise of cutting-edge electronica, scoring tunes for laptop and string octet, pushing her songs toward the grandeur and abstraction of contemporary classical music. On *Medúlla* Björk and a team of producers—Mark Bell, Valgeir Sigurdsson, who has worked with Icelandic group Múm, the San Francisco–based experimental duo Matmos—move further afield, crafting what amount to a cappella mini-symphonies. Even Björk's most devoted fans, who relish her odd juxtapositions, may find themselves bewildered by songs that hover somewhere between Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares, Meredith Monk and ambient techno.

Certainly, there's never been a pop tune

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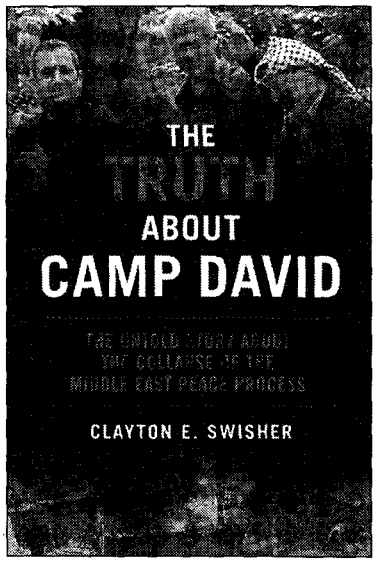

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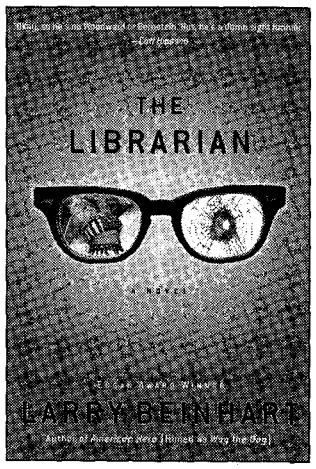

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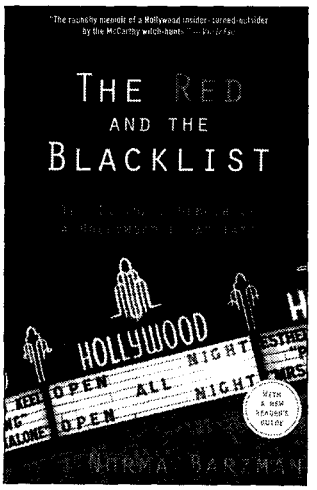

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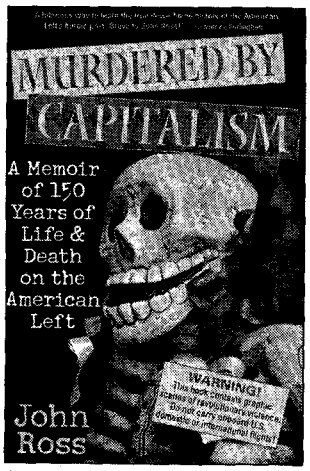

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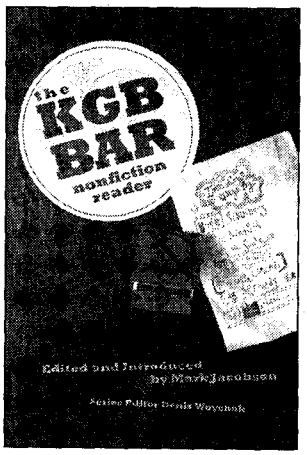

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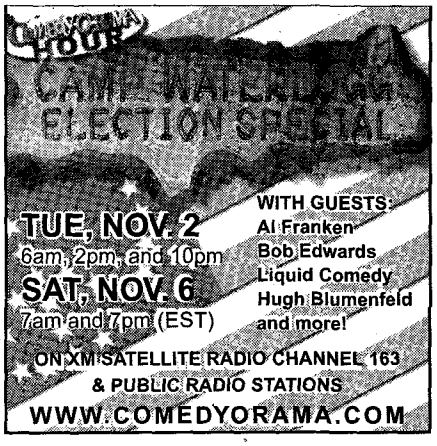

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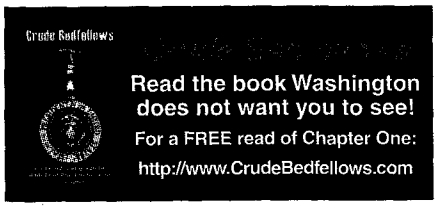
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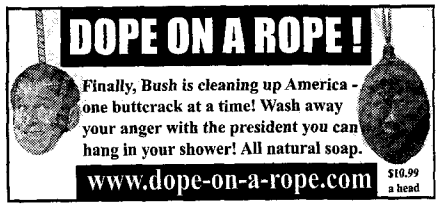
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quite like "Where Is the Line," which dangles Björk's lead vocal melody between a rubbery beat and the dissonant drone of the Icelandic Choir. Midway through, the choir breaks into an eerie whistle; several phantom Björks surface via the magic of multitracking, echoing the vocal line and dissolving in a haze of radio static; and human trombonist Gregory Purnhagen, punk singer Mike Patton and the virtuoso human beatboxer Rahzel layer on grunts and growls that ricochet across the stereo spectrum.

Other songs are even weirder. "Sonnets/Unrealities XI" pairs Björk with the Icelandic Choir in a plainchant setting of an e.e. cummings poem—call it Gregorian Pop. "Ancestors," one of the few tunes to add extra instrumentation, finds Björk singing a stately melody—in lyrics that might be English, Icelandic or just plain gibberish—backed by a few stray piano chords and the quavering cries of throat-singer Tanya Tagaq.

It's tempting to dismiss *Medúlla* as a pretentious stunt. Björk is a famously artsy-fartsy pop star—a darling of the Whitney Biennial set, the girlfriend of artist Matthew Barney, the star of Lars von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark*, an avant-garde fashion plate who turned up at the 2001 Oscars swaddled in a swan carcass, looking like a walking Damien Hirst installation. In a *Rolling Stone* interview before the release of *Medúlla*, she announced, "Instruments are so over," an idea that might play well in the Scandinavian salons that brought us the Dogme 95 film movement but sounds silly down here on planet Earth.

A song like "Triumph of a Heart" does little to dispel the skepticism. It's a catchy, propulsive dance tune, reminiscent of several earlier Björk club anthems, in which Rahzel and an amazing Japanese beatboxer named Dokaka replicate the 4/4 bump of a house-music track. In fact, the beatboxers do such an astonishing job of mimicking the sound of a kick drum and various accompanying electronic squiggles and beeps, you can't help but ask: What's the point? In the past, Björk has made gorgeous dance music by sampling and looping computers that impersonate instruments; here, she makes gorgeous dance music by sampling and looping singers impersonating computers that impersonate instruments. It's a neat trick, but why bother paying for the plane flights and studio time when you can boot up your laptop and get the same result? At such moments, *Medúlla* seems like something rather more mundane than the herald of a post-instrumental new musical order: Björk Unplugged.

But on further listening—close listening—the album begins to open itself up to you. The man-as-machine verisimilitude of the beatboxers is gimmicky, but *Medúlla* teems with other, strange and beautiful sounds that can only be produced by vocal chords crammed into traditional verse-chorus pop songs and spread across sprawling abstract pieces, chopped up and reconfigured like dance tracks. The album's centerpiece is "Oceania," a ravishing song written for the opening ceremony of the Athens Summer Olympics, in which Björk sings in the voice of "Mother Oceania," cooing comfort to her "little ones": islands and continents. "Oceania" features a gritty lead vocal, but the song's tour de force is the arrangement Björk has composed for the London Choir, a gloriously burnished version of haunted house music—swooping, rising and descending scales, the sound of a ship being pitched on ocean swells.

Rock journalists frequently refer to Björk as a "pixie"—and to be sure, this tiny woman with twinkling, almond-shaped eyes and a funny accent has an air of the enchanted wood-sprite about her. But no one who has heard Björk's grand, growling signature songs like "Hyper-Ballad" or "Joga" can doubt that she's a diva—not a modern-day ice queen diva like Madonna but a red-blooded diva in the Piaf-Callas-Billie Holiday mode, a fearless emotional exhibitionist who stuffs and mounts her joy and pain in song after song. Many of Björk's best moments are almost too personal to bear. "Pagan Poetry," from *Vespertine* (2001), builds slowly, with Björk wailing over swelling keyboard crescendos—"The darkest pit in me/It's pagan poetry.... He makes me want to hurt myself again"—until, at the song's four-minute mark, all the music drops away, leaving Björk utterly exposed: "I love him, I love him/I love him, I love him/I love him, I love him/I love him, I love him," she sings.

With *Medúlla*, Björk reaches a new milestone in her journey inward. Since launching her solo career in 1993 (she had been a singer in a post-punk guitar band, the Sugarcubes), she has continually sought more spartan settings for her songs, progressing from extroverted dance music through increasingly austere forms of techno. "Medulla" is Latin for marrow, and the record, stripped of nearly everything besides vocals, is an attempt at the deepest kind of unmediated musical expression—fitting for songs that reach beneath the skin and inside the bones.

But *Medúlla*'s most startling moments of emotional nakedness aren't "Pagan Po-

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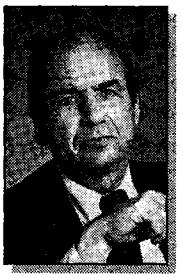

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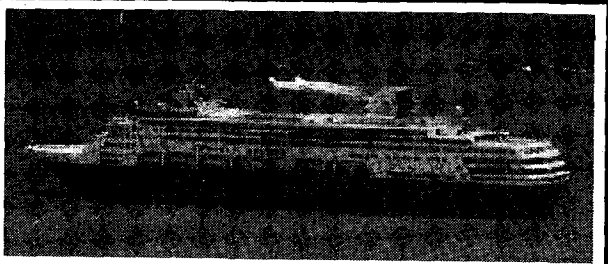
Dec. 7	Tue	Day at Sea		
Dec. 8	Wed	Phillipsburg, St. Maarten	8:00AM	6:00PM
Dec. 9	Thu	Road Town, Tortola	7:00AM	4:00PM
Dec. 10	Fri	Day at Sea		
Dec. 11	Sat	Half Moon Cay, Bahamas	8:00AM	4:00PM
Dec. 12	Sun	Ft. Lauderdale, Florida	8:00AM	



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etry"–style flights; they're not even especially musical. They're little sonic details, buried deep in *Medúlla*'s mix, some detectable only through a good pair of headphones: In "Pleasure Is All Mine," the sound of heavy panting, panned to the left of the stereo spectrum, and a gulping, swallowing sound in the far-right channel; elsewhere, stifled sobs, contented sighs, rasps, mewlings, a cry that sounds like a woman in childbirth and the most basic voice-music of all, the flutter and rush of indrawn and exhaled breath. These bewitching, unsettling sounds point beyond Björk's own universe of love and pain to the pleasantly utopian idea that even the tone-deaf among us are singers, that wherever there is a pair of lungs there is a kind of music. The most erotic lyrics you'll hear this year aren't about sex, they're Björk's paean to the mechanics of breathing in "Triumph of a Heart": "Smooth soft red velvety lungs/ Are pushing a network of oxygen joyfully/ Through a nose, through a mouth." ■

EVENTS

NATIONAL

Economy Connection

■ War and Global Capitalism. Unemployment and Recession. For speakers and resources on these and related topics, contact Economy Connection, a project of the Union for Radical Political Economics. We can provide speakers for formal or informal events sponsored by community groups, unions, high schools, colleges or political organizations. Our speakers can talk about wealth and poverty, and the economic forces that generate increasing income inequality, between and within countries. They can cut through the confusing terminology that is used to prevent ordinary, intelligent people from understanding and participating in discussions on the policies that affect our lives. Contact us at (201) 792-7459 or soapbox@comcast.net. JOIN URPE! Contact www.urpe.org, (413) 577-0806, URPE@labornet.org.

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The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: $175 for 50 words; $225 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) $2.00 each. To place an ad, call Leigh at (212) 209-5414.

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While we reserve the right to edit, reject or reclassify any advertisement, The Nation *wishes its readers to know we don't have the facilities to check the promises made by our advertisers, and we have a strong presumption against censoring any advertisement, especially if we disagree with its politics.*

ACTIVIST

PLEASE HELP SPREAD THE MESSAGE OF PEACE with a PeaceUmbrella T-shirt. $14.95 from www.peaceumbrella.com.

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ORGANIZATIONS

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA, "THE NATION IS US" discussion group forming. Connect to Lewwelge2@aol.com or (904) 398-2335.

NEW SAN FRANCISCO *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP to meet regularly on Nob Hill. Please contact George Schroeder via e-mail for more information: georges1202@comcast.net.

BREVARD, NC, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP FORMING. E-mail Jim @ JKeenen@aol.com or Don at GAIA@citcom.net.

THE *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP of the Inland Northwest is forming in the Cheney/Spokane area of eastern Washington. For information contact Gil Murray. Tel: (509) 235-1574; e-mail murraygil@aol.com.

DENTON, TX, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is forming. Contact John at (940) 498-4485 for more information.

ATTENTION BENELUX *NATION* READERS! Want your own *Nation* discussion group? Group to meet in Hasselt (Limburg), Belgium. For further information e-mail associates@thenation.com or write The Nation Associates, *The Nation*, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, USA.

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***THE NATION* SEEKS AN EXPERIENCED PRODUCTION DIRECTOR:** Position will be responsible for production and basic design of weekly magazine and other printed materials, budgeting, management of work flow and weekly production of the magazine's website. Candidate should have in-depth knowledge of current desktop publishing technology (QuarkXPress, QPS, Photoshop, Illustrator, Acrobat). Adobe InDesign and HTML experience a plus. We're looking for a highly motivated, energetic professional with 8+ years of print production/management experience, including strong knowledge of pre-press, offset web press and finishing capabilities/limitations. Director will create production technology migration strategy and budget, and manage 2005 software migration. Ability to work well with a wide array of people and departments and a strict adherence to deadlines essential. In addition to competitive salary, we offer generous benefits and an excellent work atmosphere. Equal opportunity employer, people of color and other minorities strongly encouraged to apply. E-mail résumé to: jobprod@thenation.com or mail to: The Nation, Production Director Search, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003 or fax to (212) 982-7193.

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Attach ad, typewritten if possible.

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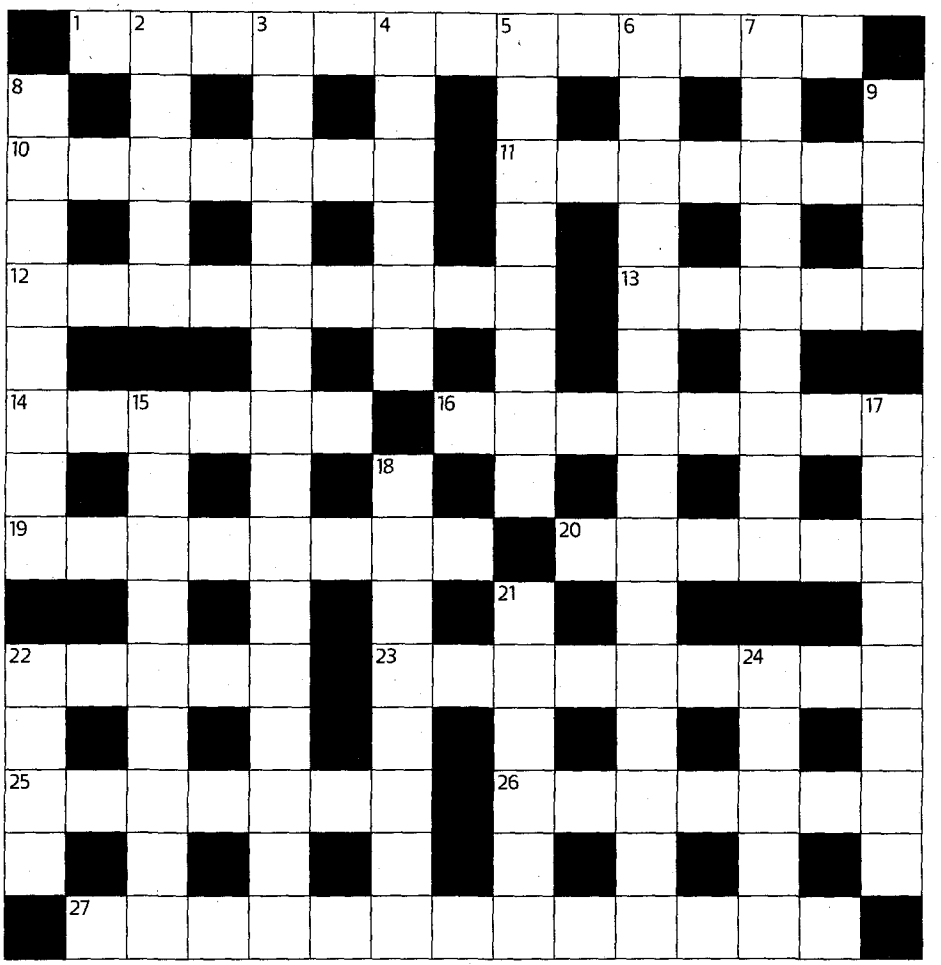

ACROSS

1 To show that the villain got what he deserved, the raven man has a nervous disorder only to finish off the cake. (6,7)

10 Admonition by the thrifty to the thriftless has no effect at all. (7)

11 You don't want to hear this noise from your car shaft when a tent is your only home! (7)

12 Such candy has no match. (9)

13 My, how the times have changed for such things! (5)

14 A lawyer in such an important case has a number with what might deserve a bow. (6)

16 All fifty-two cards, or just thirteen for the player who is low on board. (8)

19 Rather good-looking neckware to be observed by the right people. (8)

20 Gathers that improper legal punishment should be about right! (6)

22 Loyal and faithful—that is, in a broken leg. (5)

23 Oliver again? Rats! (He brings it back to be used as a pointer.) (5,4)

25 When the moon is clouded to the east, it's disgusting! (7)

26 People in the wrong, legally, are in agony. (7)

27 ___with cursory? Mary Mary, Peter Peter, and Tom Tom are starters with such. (7,6)

DOWN

2 Bonny evidently doesn't tell the truth over it. (5)

3 Nectar, if they gobble it up vigorously—but we say happenstance might be here. (3,3,2,3,4)

4 Finally, he got his stand! (6)

5 One who is still waiting for his first ring is—for after this it is not justified. (8)

6 Proving Jefferson, Nixon and Truman in common terms could be just like anybody! (3,4,3,5)

7 An illegal act to signal with a handkerchief—with a rush of such. (5,4)

8 Affected emotionally, the light might be. (6,2)

9 Times Lincoln was said to belong to, finally—a possibly sage presentation. (4)

15 Did he have cardinal virtues with a lot of money at one point, instead? (9)

17 I would come up with a secret arrangement, but a very carefully differentiated version. (8)

18 Dancer, for example, having control over the climbing reed. (8)

21 One who packs oranges and such—with a very big bowl provided. (6)

22 Come down to earth! (4)

24 The ones here with a wrinkled sheet? (5)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

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N	■	I	■	A	■	A	■	L	■	C	■	R	■	E
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T	■	N	■	O	■	A	■	P	■	N	■	C	■	C
■	S	C	R	O	U	N	G	E	■	S	C	H	W	A
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M	A	T	U	T	I	N	A	L	■	S	I	B	Y	L
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A	■	O	■	S	■	F	■	I	■	C	■	I	■	D
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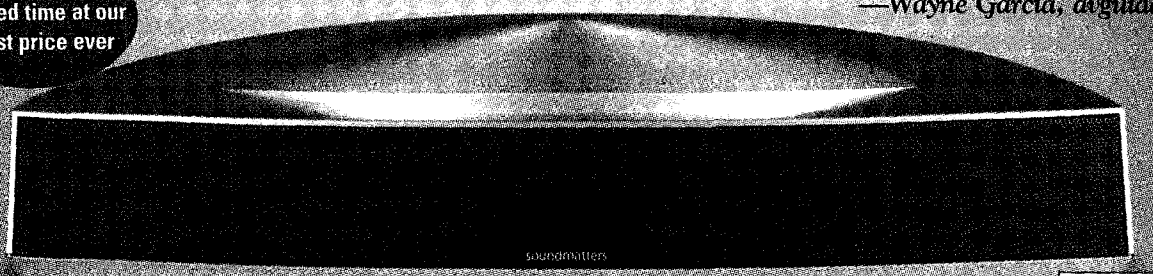

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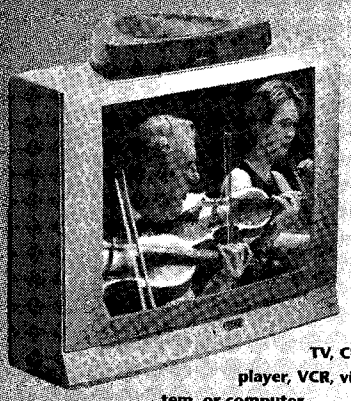

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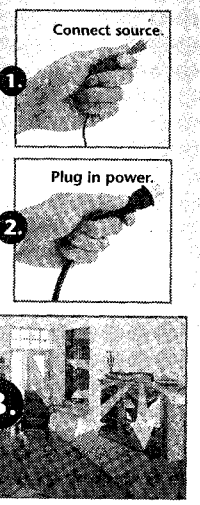

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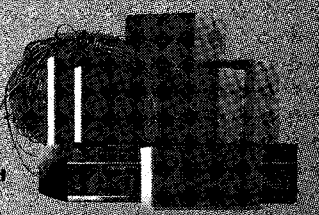

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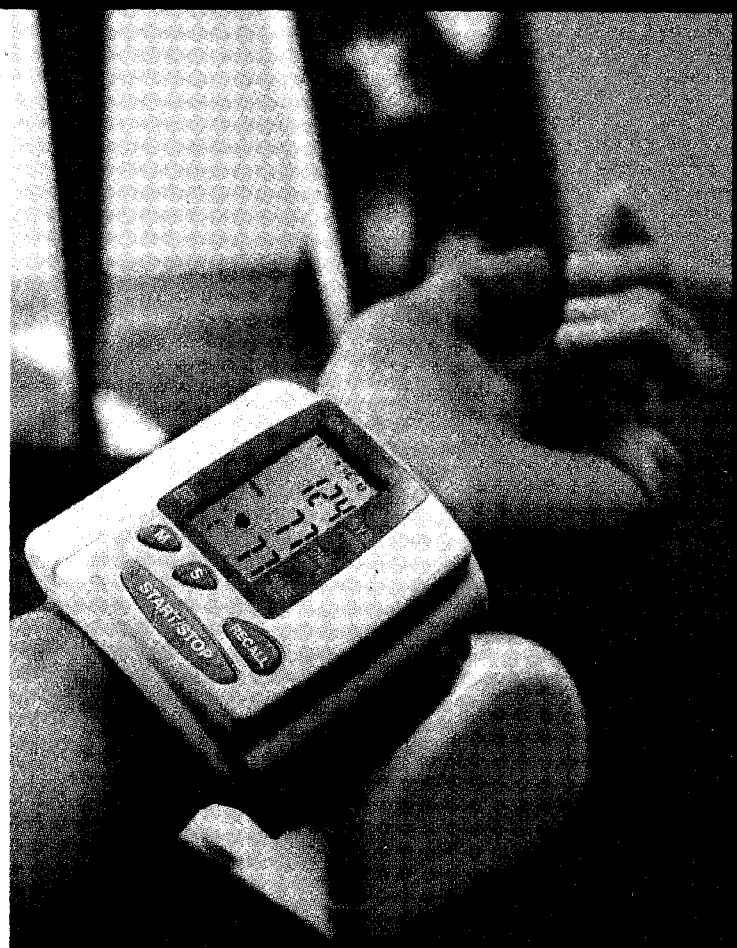
Having a personal blood pressure monitor could save your life

New technology gives you the freedom to keep track of your blood pressure in the privacy of your own home...or anywhere you go! Easy to use and completely automatic, the new Life Guard blood pressure monitor from La Crosse Technology makes it simple to accurately track your pulse rate and blood pressure.

No adjustments are required. Completely automatic, with the new wrist cuff fit, you won't even have to roll up your sleeve to take reliable readings anytime of the day or night. With the touch of a button, your Life Guard blood pressure monitor will automatically adjust to a comfortable fit, inflate to the appropriate level and then automatically deflate...giving you the information you need to safeguard your health. With an easy-to-read LCD display, the Life Guard operates on two AA batteries and includes a deluxe protective case that also acts as a convenient wrist stand so that you will be able to insure that your wrist will always be at the right angle when taking readings. Memory records your last ten measurements so you will always have history readings with you.

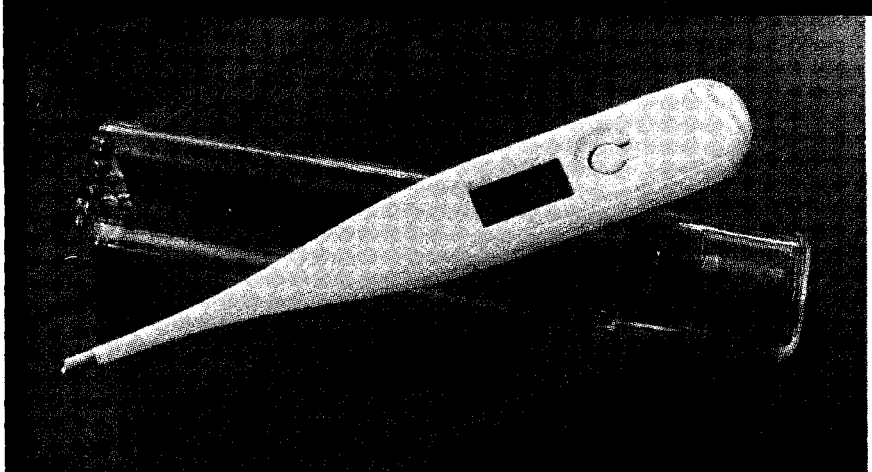
FREE offer and risk-free trial. Act now and also receive, FREE OF CHARGE, a state-of-the-art portable digital thermometer as a show of our appreciation for your purchase. Innovative Home Products home trial allows you to try the Life Guard blood pressure monitor for 30 days risk free. If you are not completely satisfied, simply return it for a full refund of the purchase price.



Easy to use and you can take it wherever you go!

FDA Approved!

CALL NOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS INCREDIBLE OFFER!



Life Guard Blood Pressure Monitor
$39.95 + S&H

LED Thermometer
~~$9.95~~ **FREE!**

Promotional Code BPM-Z100
Please mention this when you call.

877-609-3571

To order by mail, please call for details.

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